

OF OVER 40 POTENTIAL UNMASKINGS OF MIKE FLYNN DURING THE TRANSITION, JUST ONE LED TO CRIMINAL CHARGES

Chuck Grassley and Ron Johnson have just posted what they seem to think is a list of people who may have unmasked Mike Flynn's identity in the transcripts of his conversations on December 29 and 31 with Sergey Kislyak.

As a threshold matter, what it actually shows, is that over 40 recipients of intelligence may have unmasked Mike Flynn's identity in a finished NSA intelligence product between the 2016 election and inauguration. If they did, they did it by the book, with NSA approval per the accompanying letter from Paul Nakasone. And even if they unmasked Flynn's identity, the person who did so may not have read it.

The implication is that one of these unmaskings was the one (or were the ones) that led to the discovery that Mike Flynn had secretly called up the Russian Ambassador and undermined US foreign policy, acting without specific orders from Trump (at least as the public record currently stands).

Mind you, almost all of them could not be. Only 8 of them post-date the calls between Flynn and Kislyak:

- US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power (1/11/17)
- DNI James Clapper (1/7/2017)
- Secretary of the Treasury Jacob Lew (1/12/17)
- White House Chief of Staff

- Denis McDonough (1/5/17)
- DDNI Michael Dempsey (1/7/17)
 - PDDNI Stephanie O'Sullivan (1/7/17)
 - CIA/CTMC 1/10/17
 - Vice President Joe Biden 1/12/17

And of those, only the McDonough unmasking corresponds even remotely to the time the IC discovered Flynn's call, except we know FBI had already discovered it on January 4. Which is to say zero of these unmaskings could be the original one. A few people could be someone reading a transcript from the calls after the fact.

Except that some of these – such as the January 11 unmasking – are believed to relate to Mohammed bin Zayed's secret trip to the US to meet Flynn and Steve Bannon and Jared Kushner, and so are of another intercept.

There's probably a very good reason why the original unmasking doesn't show up on this list, which reflects only NSA products and only finished intelligence reports. According to Jim Comey's testimony, the FBI found the Kislyak-Flynn calls, not the NSA.

And so the last couple days of December and the first couple days of January, all the Intelligence Community was trying to figure out, so what is going on here? Why is this – why have the Russians reacted the way they did, which confused us? And so we were all tasked to find out, do you have anything [redacted] that might reflect on this? That turned up these calls at the end of December, beginning of January. And then I briefed it to the Director of National Intelligence, and Director Clapper asked me for copies [redacted], which I shared with him.

That's consistent with Mary McCord's testimony, which made it clear no one had to refer this transcript to the FBI, because it was the FBI's.

Also on page 2 of her notes, McCord noted mention of a "referral," and noted that ultimately no referral was required, as the FBI maintained the information and would not refer a matter to themselves.

Plus, Jim Comey says this never became a finished intelligence product, even while he admitted that the FBI unmasked his identity.

We did not disseminate this [redacted] in any finished intelligence, although our people judged was appropriate, for reasons that I hope are obvious, to have Mr. Flynn's name unmasked. We kept this very close hold, and it was shared just as I described.

So if this transcript was an FBI intercept that never made it into a finalized intelligence product, then it wouldn't show up in a list of finalized NSA products.

All of which is to say this list – which Politico is running with as if it's the Holy Grail – most likely has nothing to do with Flynn's conversations with Sergey Kislyak, and shows that the Deep State picked up Mike Flynn during the transition in a good deal of reporting, with reports that more than 40 people had a glimpse at. But only one recording launched an investigation.