

THE FROTHY RIGHT PROVES TRUMP BURIED 7 DETAILS OF RUSSIAN OUTREACH BY WAILING ABOUT CARTER PAGE

The other day, the government released a spreadsheet that the FBI used to validate the Steele dossier.

The spreadsheet shows that, if the Steele dossier included disinformation, the disinformation was really well crafted, because the disinformation was close enough to the truth to make known events – like Paul Manafort’s expanding corruption scandal – appear to confirm the dossier.

It also shows that when John Solomon claimed, in 2019, that the spreadsheet “was a sea of blanks,” he was wrong.

Multiple sources familiar with the FBI spreadsheet tell me the vast majority of Steele’s claims were deemed to be wrong, or could not be corroborated even with the most awesome tools available to the U.S. intelligence community. One source estimated the spreadsheet found upward of 90 percent of the dossier’s claims to be either wrong, nonverifiable or open-source intelligence found with a Google search.

In other words, it was mostly useless.

“The spreadsheet was a sea of blanks, meaning most claims couldn’t be corroborated, and those things that were found in classified intelligence suggested Steele’s intelligence was partly or totally inaccurate on several claims,” one source told me.

Given the redactions, it is unclear whether the redacted material affirmatively disproves claims from the dossier or provides partial corroboration. Since I've argued the dossier was problematic for longer than even the frothers, I don't have a stake in that. But the spreadsheet in no way was full of blanks. There are relatively few blank entries in the spreadsheet.

Which means, if it was disinformation, it succeeded in wasting a lot of the FBI's time.

But a potentially more important detail from the spreadsheet is that it shows the Carter Page FISA collection was useful in testing the dossier's claims. Probably, given other soft corroboration and Igor Danchenko's claims to have two independent sources backing the claim, the FISA collection produced evidence that made it harder to rule out a meeting between Igor Sechin and Page (which is what the Mueller Report ultimately concluded, that they couldn't rule it out; 302s show there was time in Page's schedule he didn't account for).

And Trump has succeeded in burying that useful intelligence, even the intelligence collected during a period when – the bipartisan SSCI Report concluded – the FISA application targeting Page was appropriate.

In September, the FISA Court unsealed an opinion explaining its decision to sequester the intelligence collected under the Carter Page orders. The order reveals that, when the Court asked whether it should treat the first two applications targeting Page the same way it would treat the two for which DOJ had withdrawn probable cause determination, DOJ declined to do so.

In fact, in response to the Court's directive to explain why retaining the Page FISA information "in the manner intended by the government, and any contemplated use or disclosure of it," comport with §§ 1809(a)(2) and 1827(a)(2), Jan. 7, 2020, Order at 2,

the government declined to argue, even alternatively, that those provisions do not apply (or apply differently) to information obtained under the first two dockets. See Feb. 5, 2020, Resp. at 28-29. Under the circumstances, the Court will assume that §§ 1 809(a)(2) and 1 827(a)(2) apply to information acquired under color of the first and second dockets just as, per the government's admission, they apply to information acquired under color of the third and fourth.

This had the result that, even though DOJ itself did not withdraw its probable cause determination, and even though a bipartisan committee at SSCI believed the initial applications were merited, all four applications targeting Page would be treated as if the applications were improper.

DOJ did not tell the FISC that it was (and probably still is) criminally investigating several people involved in these applications, meaning the FISC opinion sequestering case file information would be make necessary source information unavailable for anyone targeted in that investigation to show that the applications were reasonable.

That may have been part of the point.

And the Steele dossier spreadsheet shows in tangible form that useful information – whether it corroborated suspicions against Page or disproved them – has been sealed permanently as a result. The spreadsheet redacts information on the following topics because of FISC's decision to sequester everything collected under the Page applications:

- Whether Page and Igor Sechin met (at least two instances)
- Page alleged meeting with Divyekin

- Page's role in the Trump campaign
- Information on the Trump campaign's Ukrainian and Baltic policy (this may be information from Page's December 2016 trip, where he was claiming to speak for Trump about Ukraine)
- The Trump campaign's attempts to downplay Russian ties (which may pertain to efforts to get Page to stop claiming to be tied to the campaign) (at least two instances)
- The Kremlin's outreach to Carter Page (which may pertain to Dmitry Peskov's decision not to meet with Page in July 2016, because Russia was targeting others more aggressively)
- Russian outreach to Trump (which may be a repeat of the Kremlin outreach)

I get why the FISC would want to rule aggressively to protect Carter Page's privacy, and I'm fine with the decision.

But this intelligence seems like it would be really useful to understanding the Russian operation, even if Page was targeted by Russian disinformation. Indeed, this intelligence would be really important to understand the nature of the disinformation Russia fed the US.

The decision by Trump's DOJ not to stand by its earlier decision that the first two applications were appropriate had the effect, then, of

burying intelligence on Trump and the Russian operation.

Which was likely part of the point.