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## ***Democratic memo defends FBI's illegal spying on Trump campaign***

On Saturday, the US House Intelligence Committee released a redacted version of a memo written by the committee's ranking Democrat, Representative Adam Schiff of California. It purported to rebut the memo released three weeks ago by the Republican chairman, Devin Nunes, accusing the Federal Bureau of Investigation of carrying out an illegal and politically motivated surveillance of former Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

The Nunes memo was part of a bitter political conflict between two equally reactionary factions within the American ruling class and state—a conflict that has only underscored the descent of the entire US political system into criminality and antidemocratic conspiracies against the broad mass of the people.

The Republican memo, released over strident opposition from the Democratic Party and the US intelligence agencies, whose authority the Democrats unquestioningly uphold, exposed the fact that the Obama administration Justice Department violated legal procedures in obtaining a warrant from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court in October 2016 to wiretap Page.

In its warrant application to the secret court, the FBI used information alleging Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and collusion by the campaign of then-candidate Donald Trump that was solicited by the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee, without informing the court that the source for the information, former British spy Christopher Steele, had been paid by Trump's election opponents.

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This revelation was highly damaging to the fabricated narrative of Russian “meddling” in the election in support of Trump. This unsubstantiated claim has become the axis of the Democratic Party’s efforts to whip up anti-Russian hysteria in preparation for war with Moscow, and to oppose Trump not from the standpoint of his warmongering, his tax windfall for the rich or his attacks on democratic rights and social programs, but rather for his insufficiently aggressive posture toward the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Nunes memo, notwithstanding the partisan motives of its authors and the absurdity of the attempt by Trump to posture as a defender of due process and democratic rights, exposed the partisan and politically motivated basis of the entire anti-Russia campaign and the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into Russian “meddling” and alleged collusion by Trump officials.

It documented the existence of a conspiracy between the Obama administration, the Clinton campaign and the FBI, using the Star Chamber auspices of the FISA court, to manipulate the election in support of Clinton, the favored candidate of Wall Street and the dominant factions of the military and intelligence establishment.

The Schiff memo released Saturday is in every respect a right-wing document. It graphically illustrates the fact that the Democratic Party has shifted so far to the right that it has become the most subservient defender of the Pentagon, the CIA, the NSA, the FBI and the entire repressive apparatus of the American capitalist state.

The *New York Times*, which has served as the chief mouthpiece for the Democratic Party-led anti-Russia campaign, published an unvarnished piece of propaganda in the guise of “news” as its front-page lead article on Sunday. Carrying the secondary headline “A Forceful Defense of an FBI Under Attack From the GOP,” the article declared:

For weeks, instead of focusing its full energy on investigating an attack on the American democratic system, the [House Intelligence] committee has been pulled into a furious effort by Mr. Trump and his allies to sow doubts about the integrity of the special counsel inquiry and the agencies conducting it.

The Democratic memo amounted to a forceful rebuttal to the president’s portrayal of the Russian inquiry as a “witch hunt” being perpetrated by politically biased leaders of the FBI and the Justice Department.

Along the same lines, the Schiff memo begins with a condemnation of the Republican majority on the House Intelligence Committee for criticizing the FBI, the Justice Department, the Special Counsel and the FISA court. It calls the Nunes memo “a

transparent effort to undermine these agencies” and refers to the FISA court as a “vital tool.”

These are agencies that throughout their history have engaged in mass surveillance, conspiracy, frame-up and assassination directed against the working class and socialist opponents of the capitalist system. The FISA court, supposedly a pillar of American democracy, rejected a total of 12 out of 34,000 surveillance warrant requests between 1970 and 2013.

The Democratic memo does not, in fact, refute the basic charge in the Nunes memo that the Obama Justice Department failed to inform the court in its warrant application that the information in the anti-Trump Steele dossier was paid for by the Democrats. Instead, it engages in sophistry and evasion centering on the claim that the Steele information was only a part of the FBI submission and the agency had been tracking Carter Page as a suspected Russian agent for a number of years.

Page, a right-wing Republican, headquartered his business operations in Moscow for a period and has had many contacts with Russian business and political figures. The basic premise of the FBI allegations against him, reported uncritically in the Schiff memo, is that any contact with Russians is tantamount to treasonous collusion with a foreign enemy. Thus the memo imparts a sinister significance to the fact that, according to the Steele dossier, in July of 2016 Page met separately in Moscow with Igor Sechin, the head of the state-owned oil company Rosneft, and Igor Divyekin, described as a “senior Kremlin official.” Divyekin allegedly offered to supply Page with compromising information on Hillary Clinton, but the document does not stipulate that Page actually received any such information.

The memo cites as additional incriminating evidence the fact that while in Moscow, Page gave a commencement address.

Given the fact that Page is a US citizen who has not been charged with any crime, Schiff’s statements regarding him in an official government document can be described only as a witch hunt. The Democratic memo cites FBI reports that Russian intelligence agents attempted to recruit Page, but says nothing about him accepting their offers. Nevertheless, it employs language designed to convey the notion that he is a Russian spy. This includes references to “Page’s history with Russian intelligence” and “Page’s suspicious activities in 2016, including in Moscow.”

The memo asserts that the wiretap of Page “allowed the FBI to collect valuable intelligence,” as though this alleged fact renders any legal violations in obtaining the

warrant irrelevant. It goes on to argue that the decision of the FISA court to renew the warrant on Page three times is proof “that the FBI collected important investigating information and leads by conducting court-approved surveillance.”

Schiff’s memo is notably silent on one of the most damning allegations from the Nunes document: That acting FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe told the House Intelligence Committee in December of last year that “no surveillance warrant would have been sought from the FISC without the Steele dossier information.”