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Long-time CIA asset named as FBI's spy on Trump campaign

The naming of Stefan Halper as the individual sent by the FBI to spy on the Trump campaign during the 2016 election campaign has further inflamed the political warfare raging within the US state apparatus and political establishment. Halper is a long-time CIA asset with deep ties to US and British intelligence.

Published reports that the FBI had used a confidential informant to gather information on the Trump campaign led US President Donald Trump to announce via Twitter on Sunday, "I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes, and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!"

Repeating his denunciation of the year-old probe by Robert Mueller, the special counsel who is investigating alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election and possible collusion by the Trump campaign, as a "witch hunt," Trump declared last week that the report of FBI spying on his campaign was a political scandal "bigger than Watergate."

A few hours after Trump's latest tweet, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein issued a statement saying that the Department of Justice had referred the matter to its inspector general, who is already reviewing applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to monitor former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page. Rosenstein said the inspector general would determine "whether there was any impropriety or political motivation in how the FBI conducted its counterintelligence investigation of persons

suspected of involvement with the Russian agents who interfered in the 2016 presidential election.”

The identification of Halper—who was implicated as the leading figure in a conspiracy by intelligence agents to subvert then-President Jimmy Carter’s re-election campaign in 1980—as the covert FBI spy has been the subject of a heated debate in Washington and the media.

Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the two papers of record for the US political establishment, have studiously observed the demands of the FBI to conceal Halper’s identity.

The *Post* reported that it was concealing the identity of the spy from the American people because of “warnings from US intelligence officials that exposing him could endanger him or his contacts.” For its part, the *Times* merely indicated that it was following standard operating procedure, stating that it “has learned the source’s identity but typically does not name informants to preserve their safety.” Nothing could more nakedly expose the US media as a propaganda extension of the American intelligence agencies.

The White House has backed the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Devin Nunes of California, who issued congressional subpoenas demanding that the Justice Department turn over documents on the origins of the investigation into the Trump campaign and the role of FBI spies. Nunes has demanded that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein be held in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over the documents.

Democrats have rallied behind the FBI’s defiance of congressional oversight. Leading Democrats have rushed to the defense of the intelligence agencies, denouncing Trump and Nunes for allegedly placing US security at risk.

Senator Mark Warner, the ranking Democrat on the Senate intelligence panel, appeared on the CBS News program “Face the Nation” Sunday—well after Halper’s identity as the FBI covert agent had already been revealed by a number of publications—to threaten that “when individuals want to try to reveal classified information about the identity of an FBI or CIA source, that is against the law.”

Warner went on to warn that the attack on the Justice Department and the FBI by Trump and his allies “leads to an... era where people can start saying I’m going to decide which laws I want to follow and which laws I don’t want to follow.” He went on to declare that “classified information, identity of agents is sacrosanct.”

This line was echoed by the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Representative Adam Schiff of California, who declared on the NBC Sunday talk show “Meet the Press,” in relation to the FBI spy, that “revealing information about this individual could compromise people’s lives, it could betray a relationship with our allies, it could compromise the investigation.”

This hysterical defense of the already blown cover of the FBI informer Halper is in line with the overarching political focus of the Democratic Party’s opposition to Trump, which is directed not at his war on immigrants, attacks on social programs or tax cuts for the rich, but rather at advancing the claims of “Russian meddling” in the 2016 election and “collusion” by the Trump camp.

The protracted campaign on this issue by the Democrats and the media, together with the Mueller investigation, now in its second year, has produced no evidence to substantiate that Russian government “meddling” played any role in tilting the US elections to Trump. The most widely cited “proof” of Russian interference is the alleged purchase by unidentified Russians of \$100,000 worth of Facebook ads, less than a drop in the bucket in a \$4 billion presidential campaign.

The revelation of Halper’s role in spying on the Trump campaign has exposed the previous explanation for the origin of the FBI investigation into alleged Russian ties to the Trump campaign as a lie. As the *New York Times* reported last week, in a lengthy article based on unnamed government sources, the probe was purportedly launched after the Australian ambassador to Great Britain, Alexander Downer, contacted US authorities to recount a conversation with George Papadopoulos, a Trump foreign policy adviser, who told him about efforts to obtain “dirt” on Hillary Clinton from Russian sources.

It is now clear, however, that Halper was sent to spy on the Trump campaign before any contact from the Australian ambassador. He reportedly met, beginning in early July 2016, with at least three Trump campaign advisors. Two of them, Papadopoulos and former national security advisor Gen. Michael Flynn, have since pleaded guilty to making false statements to FBI investigators about their contacts with Russian individuals. The third, Carter Page, was the subject of an FBI surveillance warrant.

Pentagon documents indicate that the Department of Defense’s shadowy intelligence arm, the Office of Net Assessment, paid Halper \$282,000 in 2016 and \$129,000 in 2017. According to reports, Halper sought to secure Papadopoulos’s collaboration by offering him \$3,000 and an all-expenses-paid trip to London, ostensibly to produce a research paper on energy issues in the eastern Mediterranean.

The choice of Halper for this spying operation has ominous implications. His deep ties to the US intelligence apparatus date back decades. His father-in-law was Ray Cline, who headed the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence at the height of the Cold War. Halper served as an aide to Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and Alexander Haig in the Nixon and Ford administrations.

In 1980, as the director of policy coordination for Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign, Halper oversaw an operation in which CIA officials gave the campaign confidential information on the Carter administration and its foreign policy. This intelligence was in turn utilized to further back-channel negotiations between Reagan's campaign manager and subsequent CIA director William Casey and representatives of Iran to delay the release of the American embassy hostages until after the election, in order to prevent Carter from scoring a foreign policy victory on the eve of the November vote.

Halper subsequently held posts as deputy assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs and senior adviser to the Pentagon and Justice Department. More recently, Halper has collaborated with Richard Dearlove, the former head of MI6, the British intelligence service, in directing the Cambridge Security Initiative (CSI), a security think tank that lists the US and UK governments as its principal clients.

Before the 2016 election, Halper had expressed his view—shared by predominant layers within the intelligence agencies—that Clinton's election would prove “less disruptive” than Trump's.

The revelations of the role played by Halper point to an intervention in the 2016 elections by the US intelligence agencies that far eclipsed anything one could even imagine the Kremlin attempting.