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The Spy State Unleashed

By Justin Raimondo
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After hearing about an alleged Russian plot to throw the election to Donald Trump for eight months, amid leaks by “former government and intelligence officials,” this media narrative being pushed relentlessly by Rachel Maddow and the fake journalists over at CNN has come to naught. I’ve pinned a tweet to the top of my Twitter profile that’s my answer to this sort of nonsense:

None of the official reports issued by our intelligence agencies and made public contains a lick of real evidence that the Kremlin guided and encouraged Trump’s rise to power: they consist of simple assertions, and exclamations of “high confidence,” without giving anyone a reason to feel the least amount of confidence in their conclusions. They hide behind the old “sources and methods” excuse in their failure to provide what could even loosely be defined as proof of their allegations. Yet some of these “sources and methods” have come to light anyway, as the leakers desperately try to salvage their failing narrative.

The latest focus of the conspiracy theorists is that Carter Page, an economic consultant specializing in Russian energy resources, who served as an unpaid and informal advisor to the Trump campaign, is the key link between the Russians and the Trump campaign. A report in the *Washington Post* alleges that the FBI obtained an order from the FISA court allowing it to spy on Page, and CNN followed up with a story telling us that the factual basis of the surveillance

request was the infamous “dirty dossier” compiled by “ex”-MI6 agent Christopher Steele, which contains sensationalistic allegations about Trump’s sexual activities while in Russia. The dossier also alleges that Carter was bribed with offers of a deal with the Russian energy company Rosneft in exchange for somehow effecting a 180-degree turnabout in US policy in Ukraine.

The dossier is dodgy in more ways than one: aside from the fact that it contains a number of factual errors, Steele was paid by a mysterious group of anti-Trump Republicans, initially, and later by an opposition research firm linked to the Democrats. Furthermore, Steele paid his sources – an incentive to make stuff up, or at least blow marginal “intelligence” out of proportion. In a letter to FBI director James Comey requesting documents relating to this arrangement, Sen. Charles “Chuck” Grassley (R-Iowa), writes:

“The idea that the FBI and associates of the Clinton campaign would pay Mr. Steele to investigate the Republican nominee for President in the run-up to the election raises further questions about the FBI’s independence from politics, as well as the Obama administration’s use of law enforcement and intelligence agencies for political ends.”

The media and the Clintonian dead-enders – or do I repeat myself? – are unconcerned about the implications of such an arrangement. That the FBI and who knows what other “intelligence” agencies were paying Steele to spy on the opposition party in the run up to and in the aftermath of a presidential election is just routine, as far as these people are concerned. It doesn’t matter to them that a bought-and-paid-for dossier consisting of unconfirmed speculation was the basis for the FISA court’s approval of a request to spy on the Trump campaign. Evidence? Facts? Don’t be so old-fashioned! The Surveillance State is a lawless entity, and there’s no use trying to tie it to traditional standards of legality, never mind propriety.

The *New York Times* reports that the FBI’s interest in Page was sparked when he went to Russia and made a speech criticizing US foreign policy:

“[W]hen [Page] became a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign last year and gave a Russia-friendly speech at a prestigious Moscow institute, it soon caught the bureau’s attention. That trip last July was a catalyst for the F.B.I. investigation into connections between Russia and President Trump’s campaign, according to current and former law enforcement and intelligence officials.”

It doesn’t take much to attract the FBI’s attention. All you have to do is dissent from the foreign policy “consensus.” As Mollie Hemingway notes over at *The Federalist*:

“If this is true that this was the catalyst, it is concerning. The Times article explains at great length how little a role Page had in the campaign and how far from central he was, to put it mildly. It notes that he worked in Russia and was critical of U.S. foreign policy toward Russia. At no point is anything illegal alleged. To be clear, since many in the media are not clear on this point, it is still legal in this country to be critical of US foreign policy toward another country.”

It may still be legal to be critical of US foreign policy, but it’s also legal to spy on you if you get too noisy about it. When you have a secret “court” that has only denied permission to spy on

Americans a mere 12 times out of some 34,000, as Hemingway notes, then the standard of “legality” is formally met, but in reality what you have is a police state apparatus in place.

The FISA court and its “legal” underpinning have been around since 1978, and in all that time we never heard a peep out of anyone but a few marginalized libertarians pointing out its potential for political repression. Now, suddenly, conservatives are waking up the fact that our “intelligence” agencies are policing the political discourse – because it’s their ox being gored.

Well, better late than never.

It’s not like the FBI has been politically neutral all these years: remember Cointelpro? Remember how they spied on Martin Luther King? And lest you think it’s just the left they’ve gone after, here’s a little bit of largely hidden history for you: Franklin Roosevelt sicced the feds on the America First Committee and other opponents of going to war in Europe in the run up to World War II. He had his Attorney General charge war opponents with “sedition,” and the media – far from rising up against this abuse of power – cheered the President on. Indeed, a *Washington Post* reporter, Dillard Stokes, collaborated with the FBI in setting up the defendants for the phony charge of encouraging mutiny in the armed forces.

I don’t recall anyone at The Federalist rushing to the defense of Antiwar.com when it was revealed that the FBI was spying on us due to our foreign policy position. Not a single conservative voice was raised in protest at their designation of myself and our webmaster, Eric Garris, as possible “agents of a foreign power” – a conclusion based on absolutely nothing substantial.

First they came for the right, and liberals said nothing but “good job!” Then they came for the left, and conservatives said “But communism!” Then they came for Antiwar.com, and nobody said a word. Now that they’re coming for Trump, the left is once again cheering while the right is aghast – and the Trump administration, far from dismantling the apparatus of repression, wants to give “law enforcement” a blank check to spy on the American people.

Don’t say we didn’t warn you.