

Bitter recriminations within the ruling class over Trump's claim that Obama spied on his campaign

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6 March 2017

The extraordinary political crisis gripping the American state intensified over the weekend after US President Donald Trump accused former President Obama of wiretapping his phones as part of an investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

In a series of Twitter posts early Saturday morning, Trump accused Obama of spying on his communications during the 2016 election campaign. "Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the [electoral] victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

He added in a subsequent post, "How low has President Obama gone to tapp [sic] my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!" White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer followed up by demanding that Congress investigate the Obama White House "as part of their investigation into Russian activity."

The ferocious conflict within the state was underscored by a report Sunday evening in the *New York Times* that FBI Director James Comey asked the Justice Department to issue a statement denying Trump's claims, but that the Justice Department has not done so.

The *Times* commented, "Mr. Comey's request is a remarkable rebuke of a sitting president, putting the nation's top law enforcement official in the position of questioning Mr. Trump's truthfulness." Comey, a high-level DOJ official in the Bush administration, was appointed by Obama to head the FBI in September 2013 and has continued this role under Trump.

In an indication of the lack of evidence behind the campaign of the media and Democratic Party over "Russian hacking," the *Times* reported that "in addition

to being concerned about potential attacks on the bureau's credibility, senior FBI officials are said to be worried that the notion of a court-approved wiretap will raise the public's expectations that the federal authorities have significant evidence implicating the Trump campaign in colluding with Russia's efforts to disrupt the presidential election."

The revelation of Comey's extraordinary intervention marked a new high point in tensions between the White House and the media, which earlier in the week appeared to have partially subsided following Trump's address to a joint session of Congress on Tuesday.

Trump's speech, in which he reiterated his pledges to oversee a massive handout to the corporations and Wall Street, evoked a largely favorable response from the press and sent stock markets soaring.

On Wednesday, however, the *Washington Post* reported that Attorney General Jeff Sessions met twice with Russia's ambassador to the United States—which he did not mention at his confirmation hearing last month—setting off a media furor that led to Sessions' recusal Thursday from the FBI investigation into the Trump administration's ties to Russia.

According to reports by Politico and the *Washington Post*, Sessions made the decision to recuse himself without consulting Trump, leading to a "furious" response from the president on Friday, followed by the Tweets on Saturday morning.

In response to Trump's accusation, an Obama spokesman made a blanket denial that the Obama White House ordered surveillance on Trump or any other American citizen.

"Neither President Obama nor any White House official ever ordered surveillance on any US citizen,"

said Obama spokesman Kevin Lewis, adding that “any suggestion otherwise is simply false.” While the suggestion that the government does not oversee spying on US citizens is patently absurd, Trump has not provided any evidence to back up his assertion of a wiretapping order.

On Sunday, Josh Earnest, the former White House spokesperson, took a cautious and defensive posture. Asked by ABC’s Martha Raddatz, “Can you categorically deny that the Obama Justice Department did not seek and obtain a FISA court-ordered wiretap of the Trump campaign?” Earnest said, “I don’t know,” saying he was “not in a position of being regularly briefed on an FBI criminal or counterintelligence investigation.”

Speaking subsequently on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper denied Trump’s accusations, declaring, “There is no FISA court order, not to my knowledge, of anything at Trump Tower.”

Whatever the veracity of the charges, the conflict between the Trump administration and its critics within the political establishment are the form taken by a conflict within the American ruling class, centered on issues of foreign policy.

Within this conflict, there is no progressive or democratic side. The Democrats have chosen to oppose Trump on an entirely reactionary, pro-war basis, seeking to whip up a McCarthyite political atmosphere that demoralizes and disorients the broad popular opposition to Trump while laying the basis for war against Russia and domestic repression.

The media furor over the weekend served to distract attention from a series of reactionary measures by the Trump administration.

Mass roundups of undocumented workers are continuing, while newspapers carried reports over the weekend that the White House is making plans to break up families caught crossing the border, placing children in state custody while their parents are imprisoned pending deportation.

The administration is also engaged in a substantial military escalation in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, all without any public discussion.

Last week, the Senate confirmed Rick Perry as energy secretary and Ben Carson as housing secretary, both of whom plan to radically slash social spending and

regulations in their respective departments.

The Democrats, meanwhile, have entirely focused their opposition to Trump not on his reactionary domestic policies, but on ensuring that he does not back down from the United States’ deepening confrontation with Russia.



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