

White House meeting on probe of Trump campaign informant

Patrick Martin
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President Trump met Monday afternoon with three top Justice Department and intelligence officials to press his demand that the Department of Justice investigate the use of an FBI informant inside the Trump campaign during the 2016 election. FBI Director Christopher Wray, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats all attended the hour-long meeting and were seen leaving the White House at about 4 p.m.

While no details of the discussion have been made public, Trump tweeted Sunday that on Monday he would officially demand that the Justice Department review the propriety of alleged FBI infiltration of the 2016 Republican presidential campaign, including whether it was ordered by the Obama White House in order to assist the Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton.

Rosenstein issued a statement Sunday afternoon promising to follow Trump's request and referring it to the Justice Department's inspector general, Michael Horowitz, who is already conducting a series of investigations into FBI and Justice Department actions during the 2016 campaign. His purview already includes the FBI investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as secretary of state in the Obama administration, as well as the actions of FBI officials during the fall campaign, when there were frequent leaks to the media about investigations into both the Trump and Clinton campaigns.

The initial Rosenstein statement was widely described as an effort to fob off the Trump request by adding it to Horowitz's lengthy list of tasks, thus ensuring that any action would be delayed for many months, presumably well past the November mid-term elections.

The White House meeting Monday, which included high-ranking officials viewed as closer to Trump than Rosenstein, appeared to be an effort to jump-start the investigation into the FBI informant, who has been identified in news media reports as 73-year-old Stefan Halper, a longstanding figure in the ranks of Republican national security operatives. He is a former official of the Reagan and the first Bush administrations, and most recently a professor at Cambridge University in Great Britain.

Halper reportedly sought to develop relationships with at least three Trump campaign officials: George Papadopoulos and Carter Page, both foreign policy advisers, and Sam Clovis, a figure closer to the Trump inner circle.

The FBI's use of an informant to spy on the Trump campaign has placed a spotlight on the immense power wielded behind the scenes by the political police and intelligence agencies of the American ruling class and their manipulation of elections and every other aspect of political life in the US. In the 2016 election, the FBI was simultaneously investigating both the Trump and Clinton campaigns, using its informants and surveillance methods in an effort to influence the outcome.

During the campaign, a whole series of former CIA, NSA and State Department officials publicly declared their opposition to a Trump presidency and their support for Clinton, who was seen as a more competent and reliable custodian of American imperialist interests around the world. There was also, and there remains, a great deal of concern within ruling circles that Trump could not be trusted—as could Clinton—to continue and intensify the anti-Russia offensive launched by the Obama administration.

The latest revelations of government spying on the

Trump campaign undermine the concocted narrative of Russian “meddling” in the election, which has been used by sections of the intelligence apparatus and the Democratic Party to attack Trump and pressure him to escalate US provocations against Russia as well as the US war in Syria. Nothing Vladimir Putin could have done compares to the massive and completely undemocratic intervention of the police and intelligence agencies of the American state into the election.

Only one topic of Monday’s White House meeting seems definite: Trump demanded that Rosenstein agree to share information on the FBI informant with the House Intelligence Committee and other congressional leaders who have demanded it. Trump reportedly told Rosenstein and Wray to turn over all internal memos on the informant and his actions in relation to the 2016 campaign.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued a statement afterwards that announced: “Based on the meeting with the president, the Department of Justice has asked the inspector general to expand its current investigation to include any irregularities with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s or the Department of Justice’s tactics concerning the Trump Campaign.”

Sanders added that White House Chief of Staff John Kelly will confer with national security officials and congressional leaders “to review highly classified and other information they have requested.”

What this means in practice is unclear. It seems, however, that a new stage has been reached in the ongoing political warfare in Washington, in which the Trump White House and its congressional allies are going on the offensive in an effort to discredit the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into alleged Russian interference in the elections and contacts between Russian officials and the Trump campaign.

This political turn has reinforced and made even more brazen the alliance between the Democratic Party and the intelligence and police agencies, such as the CIA and FBI, which the Democrats are defending. The ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Representative Adam Schiff, denounced Republican efforts to put the spotlight on the FBI informer in the Trump campaign, echoing FBI claims that this would damage US security interests and even

put the informer’s life in danger—a contention that is invariably made to justify secrecy and censorship, but which is particularly absurd when applied to Stefan Halper.

Speaking on the Senate floor Monday, Minority Leader Charles Schumer (Democrat from New York) said, “The president’s behavior is the kind of grossly autocratic behavior we’d expect in a banana republic, not a mature democracy... By now, we should all recognize that President Trump’s latest demand is just another example of a relentless campaign to distract from the serious wrongdoing being uncovered by the Russia probe.”

Actually, the Russia probe has uncovered no serious wrongdoing in relation to the 2016 election campaign. Mueller has obtained indictments for financial flimflam by Paul Manafort years before he became Trump campaign chairman, guilty pleas from various figures for lying to the FBI, and indictments against 13 Russians who cannot be extradited and who will never go to trial.

Trump’s lead outside attorney, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, said the documents requested by congressional Republicans and the White House will “indicate what the informant” found inside the Trump campaign. “We should be at least allowed to read them so we know this exculpatory evidence is being preserved,” he said. “It’s the FBI who has the onus for having invaded the campaign.”

Meanwhile, the two major US newspapers, which have spearheaded the anti-Russia campaign, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, continue to refuse even to print the name of the FBI informant inside the Trump campaign, even though Halper’s name has been widely publicized over the past several days. This is in keeping with their role as conduits for the CIA and purveyors of government propaganda.



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