
THE RUSSIA STORY JUST KEEPS GETTING WORSE FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP

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Two stories dealing with Russia's meddling in the election broke Tuesday night. And both were full of bad news for President Donald Trump.

The first, an exclusive to CNN, revealed that a number of Democratic and Republican lawmakers on the House and Senate intelligence committees who have seen classified documents see no evidence that Obama administration officials did anything unusual or illegal, further suggesting Rep. Devin Nunes, R-California, misled Trump (and the public) when he described documents relating to the unmasking of Trump campaign officials caught up in an incidental collection operation by the intelligence community.

Write CNN's Jim Sciutto, Manu Raju and Eric Bradner:

"Their private assessment contradicts President Donald Trump's allegations that former Obama national security adviser Susan Rice broke the law by requesting the "unmasking" of US individuals' identities. Trump had claimed the matter was a 'massive story.'"

The second, broken by The Washington Post, reveals that the FBI obtained a secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court court warrant in August 2016 aimed at monitoring the communications of one-time Trump foreign policy adviser Carter Page. The key paragraph:

"The FBI and the Justice Department obtained the warrant targeting Carter Page's communications after convincing a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court judge that there was probable cause to believe Page was acting as an agent of a foreign power, in this case Russia, according to the officials."

Scroll up. Read that one again. It's a "wow." Page has denied any wrongdoing.

What's become clear over the first few months of the Trump White House is that we aren't in the midst of a "he said-she said" when it comes to the campaign's ties to Russia. It's more of a "he alleged-he said, he said, she said, he said, he said" sort of situation.

As in, on the one hand, we have Trump asserting that the whole story of Russia's attempts to influence the election via connections within his campaign apparatus is "fake news," and grasping at the idea that somehow, some way he will be eventually proven right in his baseless claims that then-President Barack Obama ordered the wiretapping of Trump Tower.

On the other, we have FBI Director James Comey, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, the heads of both the House and Senate intelligence committees -- both Republicans -- and lots and lots of other prominent voices within the intelligence community insisting the Russian investigation is entirely justified and that no evidence exists for Trump's claims.

It's not a fair fight -- and shouldn't be presented as one. And that has zero to do with partisanship and everything to do with the facts as we know them.

The best path forward for President Trump as it relates to Russia is to pivot from his current this-is-

all-fake-news stance to one in which he embraces both the congressional and Justice Department investigations into the Russian meddling into the election. Given the amount of smoke surrounding Trump's campaign and Russia, it's no longer really a question whether it merits an investigation into whether there's some fire at its center.

Simply because that's the path Trump should take, of course, doesn't mean it's the one he will choose. In fact, for someone who prides himself on zigging when everyone thinks he should zag, Trump likely won't follow this path. But all that ensures is that the Russia story will just keep getting worse for him and his administration.

Kaynak/Source: