

POLITICS

# Surveillance Memo Released as Trump Gives Authorization

Decision was made after Trump declassified material



The White House prepared to release a classified memo that Republicans say would reveal abusive FBI surveillance tactics. FBI Director Christopher Wray tried privately to persuade the White House to keep the memo under wraps. PHOTO: BILL CLARK/CQ ROLL CALL/NEWSCOM/ZUMA PRESS

*By Byron Tau, Rebecca Ballhaus and Peter Nicholas*

Updated Feb. 2, 2018 12:23 pm ET

WASHINGTON—The House released Friday a politically charged memo alleging surveillance abuses in the final days of the Obama administration against Carter Page, an adviser to the Trump campaign on foreign policy issues.

President Donald Trump authorized the release of the memo and sent the document to the House Intelligence Committee for release.

Mr. Trump said, speaking in an Oval Office meeting, said, “A lot of people should be ashamed.” He added: “I think it’s terrible. I think it’s a disgrace.”

He didn’t specify the focus of his ire and didn’t say which people he was referring to.

The memo says surveillance against Mr. Page was approved by top officials at the Department of Justice and FBI, according to GOP congressional officials, using information from a former British spy. Top law enforcement officials knew the spy, Christopher Steele, was being paid for by the Democratic Party when they sought the warrant.

Mr. Page, who has been on the radar of U.S. intelligence since 2013 when Russian spies made an attempt to recruit him, hasn't been accused of any wrongdoing and has blasted what he calls a "baseless, politically-motivated investigation."

A White House official said Mr. Trump opted not to include any redactions in the memo, which the president on Friday also sent to House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.).

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and FBI Director Christopher Wray didn't ask the White House for any specific redactions, according to a person familiar with the matter. Justice Department and FBI officials have publicly opposed the memo's release and questioned its accuracy, and have expressed concern about what the memo left out and the chilling effect the memo's release could have on potential sources coming forward on other investigations. If Congress can unilaterally release confidential information over FBI objections, officials said, it could be difficult to persuade informants to speak to agents.

---

READ MORE

---

- [House GOP Memo Alleges Surveillance Abuses](#)
- [Read the Full Unclassified Memo](#)
- [Who's Who Among Trump's Law-Enforcement Targets](#)
- [Former Trump Aide Carter Page Was on U.S. Counterintelligence Radar Before Russia Dossier](#)
- [FBI Officials Knew of New Clinton Emails Weeks Before Alerting Congress](#)
- [FBI Deputy Chief Steps Down After Trump Criticism](#)
- [Details on the Making of Trump Russia Dossier Are Disclosed](#)

Mr. Trump's move to declassify the memo came hours after he accused senior officials and investigators at the Federal Bureau of Investigation of being biased against Republicans and favoring Democrats.

Friday, Mr. Trump said: "The top Leadership and Investigators of the FBI and the Justice Department have politicized the sacred investigative process in favor of Democrats and against Republicans - something which would have been unthinkable just a short time ago." He added: "Rank & File are great people!"

Asked if he had confidence in Mr. Rosenstein, who is mentioned in the memo, Mr. Trump said: "You figure that one out."

In a tweet early

The memo has ignited a fierce debate in Washington, with many Republicans saying the document shows civil-liberties abuses by federal investigators. Members of both parties have raised concerns, with some saying it is misleading and its planned release represents an effort to discredit the probe into whether associates of Mr. Trump colluded with Russia during the 2016 presidential election.

Mr. Trump's view is that the memo, written by Republicans on the intelligence committee, undermines the credibility of Mr. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general who is overseeing the Russia investigation, one person close to the president said Thursday. Mr. Rosenstein, who was nominated to his post by Mr. Trump, approved a renewal of surveillance of a Trump foreign policy campaign adviser, Carter Page, in the spring of 2017, The Wall Street Journal has reported.

A Justice Department spokeswoman declined to comment.

Republicans said the memo shows prosecutors used information gleaned from an ex-British spy—who was paid by a research firm hired by opponents of Mr. Trump—in their application for a secret court order to monitor Mr. Page's ties to Russia.

The Journal has previously reported that the warrant included material beyond research compiled by Christopher Steele, the former British intelligence official. Years before joining Mr. Trump's campaign and becoming a prominent figure in Mr. Steele's dossier, Mr. Page was known to U.S. counterintelligence officials, according to court records and Mr. Page's own testimony before Congress.

Mr. Trump has said privately that if Mr. Rosenstein signed off on the FISA warrant renewal based partly on an unverified dossier that Democrats helped underwrite, it raises questions about Mr. Rosenstein's impartiality and whether he is fit to oversee the Russia investigation, the person close to the president said.

"Trump sees [Mr. Rosenstein] as a guy who is out to get him from the beginning, and maybe this gives Trump the ability to fire Rod Rosenstein for cause," this person said.

One person close to Mr. Trump said he has advised the president not to release the memo. But Mr. Trump is determined to make it public in the belief that the investigative machinery is "truly corrupt and flawed," this person said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a statement Wednesday saying it had "grave concerns about material omissions of fact that fundamentally impact the memo's accuracy." The statement came after Mr. Wray, the FBI director, tried privately to persuade the White House to keep the memo under wraps.

Democrats said the memo is misleading, cherry-picked and part of a continuing GOP effort to discredit special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into whether Mr. Trump or his associates colluded with Russia.

Mr. Mueller's team is also investigating whether the president obstructed justice last year when he fired then-FBI Director James Comey, who had been spearheading the Russia probe.

Mr. Comey on Thursday evening criticized efforts to undermine the agency. "All should appreciate the FBI speaking up. I wish more of our leaders would," he tweeted. "But take heart: American history shows that, in the long run, weasels and liars never hold the field, so long as good people stand up."

Mr. Trump has denied there was collusion and that he obstructed justice. Moscow has denied it meddled in the campaign.

Democratic leaders said Thursday that the GOP chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Devin Nunes of California, had acted inappropriately and appealed to House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) to remove him from his committee post.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the House Democratic leader, described Mr. Nunes's actions as "deliberately dishonest," and Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, that chamber's Democratic leader, said House Republicans were "attack[ing] the integrity and credibility of federal law enforcement as a means to protect President Trump and undermine the work of special counsel Mueller."

Some Republicans also harbored concerns about releasing the memo. Sen. John Thune (R., S.D.), a member of the Senate leadership, said Republican lawmakers should proceed cautiously.

"They have to take into consideration what the FBI is saying and if there are things that need to be redacted, I think they need to pay careful attention to what our folks who protect us have to say about how this bears on our national security," Mr. Thune said.

He also said a memo from Democrats should be released at the same time as the GOP document. "I think if you're going to release one you have to release the other," Mr. Thune said.

Many top Republicans, including Mr. Ryan, have defended the GOP lawmakers' vote to release the memo.

"What this memo is, is Congress doing its job and conducting legitimate oversight over a very unique law, FISA," he said. "And if mistakes were made and if individuals did something wrong, then it is our job as the legislative branch of government to conduct oversight over the executive branch if abuses were made."

Mr. Ryan said the memo is “not an indictment” of the FBI or the Justice Department.

Some House Republicans said they would go further than Mr. Nunes and release the actual documents that are footnoted in the memo.

“We should be releasing or be prepared to release the underlying documentation because the facts are really what’s important here,” Rep. Scott Perry (R., Pa.) said. “Otherwise, with good reason and predictably, the other side is going to say this memo is just political.”

—*Aruna Viswanatha and Louise Radnofsky*

*contributed to this article.*

**Write to** Byron Tau at [byron.tau@wsj.com](mailto:byron.tau@wsj.com), Rebecca Ballhaus at [Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com](mailto:Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com) and Peter Nicholas at [peter.nicholas@wsj.com](mailto:peter.nicholas@wsj.com)