



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

## Worse Than Watergate? Is Obama Like Nixon — Only More So?

*From the print edition of The New American*

"I shall resign the presidency, effective at noon tomorrow." So said President Richard Milhous Nixon on August 8, 1974, as he made history in a way he neither dreamt nor desired, becoming the first and only American chief executive to resign from office. His was the most prominent scalp claimed by the Watergate affair, the country-rending event that, wrongly no doubt, is the political scandal by which all other political scandals are now measured. This includes the current Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)-abuse story, which House Judiciary Committee member Representative Steve King (R-Iowa) said in January was "worse than Watergate."



Being only six years old when the Watergate scandal broke, it meant little to me. You know, as a child, you hear the name, think about actual water and a gate and then go back to playing with your toy soldiers. But while prior to June 18, 1972, "the Watergate" meant little more to most adults than it did to mini-me, it would soon become one of American history's most famous apartment complexes. As the *Washington Post* reported on the aforementioned date:

Five men, one of whom said he is a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency, were arrested at 2:30 a.m. yesterday in what authorities described as an elaborate plot to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee here. Three of the men were native-born Cubans and another was said to have trained Cuban exiles for guerrilla activity after the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. They were surprised at gunpoint by three plain-clothes officers of the metropolitan police department in a sixth floor office at the plush Watergate, 2600 Virginia Ave., NW, where the Democratic National Committee occupies the entire floor. There was no immediate explanation as to why the five suspects would want to bug the Democratic National Committee offices or whether or not they were working for any other individuals or organizations.

This would soon change. Two ambitious, young, liberal *Washington Post* reporters (forgive the redundancy), Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, quickly latched onto the story and began an aggressive investigation, which would ultimately be facilitated by information provided to Woodward by a secret source given the pseudonym "Deep Throat." Just a day after the above *Post* story, in fact, the two journalists reported that one of the five men arrested "is the salaried security coordinator for President Nixon's reelection committee," 53-year-old former CIA employee James W. McCord, Jr. On



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

August 1, they related that a “\$25,000 cashier’s check, apparently earmarked for the Nixon campaign, wound up in the bank account of a Watergate burglar,” Bernard L. Barker. September 29 they wrote that “John Mitchell, while serving as attorney general, controlled a secret Republican fund used to finance widespread intelligence-gathering operations against the Democrats.” And October 10 brought the revelation that “FBI agents establish that the Watergate break-in stems from a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage conducted on behalf of the Nixon reelection effort.” The bread crumbs were being followed — and these would be just the first of many damning revelations.

## Media Malfeasance

Fast-forward almost a half-century, and Bernstein is still around, though his new stance in the era of Trump makes him hardly recognizable. This man, who once applauded the release of the Pentagon Papers and ostensibly stood for government transparency, has been quite transparent in his bias. In a February 2 interview with CNN’s Jake Tapper, he criticized the release of the FISA abuse memo, saying, reported *Newsweek*, that “America is living through its darkest days since Senator Joseph McCarthy’s anti-Communist ‘witch hunts.’” Calling President Donald Trump a “demagogic authoritarian,” Bernstein “said that the memo is a ‘red herring,’ being used by the Trump administration to derail Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia,” *Newsweek* further informs.

Interestingly, “witch hunt” is also the description President Trump’s defenders use to describe the Mueller investigation itself, which law professor and lifelong Democrat Alan Dershowitz has characterized as a threat to “civil liberties” and a partisan fishing expedition disguised as an exercise in justice. Also interesting, however, was Bernstein’s rationale for why the FISA memo should have been withheld. As *Newsweek* also related, “If indeed there is exonerating evidence there, the president ought to have enough faith in our institutions, including inspectors general, the FBI, oversight committees,” he said.

That’s rich. Why doesn’t Bernstein just show faith in the institution of the presidency? This man, who’s defined by not having trusted that institution, and who made his name tackling the political establishment, now calls for essentially blind faith in other government institutions.

His position also places him at odds with his former partner, Bob Woodward. As many already know, the FISA memo relates to the surveillance of former Donald Trump campaign advisor Carter Page; it states that the FBI presented the now-infamous “Steele dossier” as evidence to a secret court for warrants to spy on Page beginning in 2016. Yet as Woodward told *Fox News Sunday* January 14, that dossier “is a garbage document. It never should have been presented in — as part of an intelligence briefing.”

Bernstein is also contradicted by his ex-employer, the *Washington Post*. Perhaps inadvertently buttressing the pro-Trump forces’ case, the paper’s Aaron Blake pointed out February 5 that the FBI has a history of being politicized (and thus isn’t worthy of Bernstein’s blind faith), writing:

Even before [famed FBI director J. Edgar] Hoover, what was then called the Bureau of Investigation was founded by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 to assist in Roosevelt’s trust-busting efforts. As the FBI’s own website says today, the bureau “was not yet strong enough to withstand the sometimes corrupting influence of patronage politics on hiring, promotions, and transfers.” By the 1920s, the FBI’s website recalls, it “had a growing reputation for politicized investigations. In 1923, in the midst of the Teapot Dome scandal that rocked the Harding Administration, the nation learned that Department of



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

Justice officials had sent Bureau agents to spy on members of Congress who had opposed its policies.”

Hoover took over the bureau in 1924 on the promise to reform it. That ... didn’t exactly happen. And for anybody who needs a refresher, read up on what the Church Committee found in the 1970s.

The point is not that the FBI should be rent root and branch, but that we need to watch the watchers as well. No government entity can be beyond oversight, and no information that doesn’t jeopardize national security should be beyond the people’s sight. This brings us to the amazing morphing memo. Prior to that FISA document’s release on February 2, prominent Democrats insisted that publicizing it would threaten our nation and that advocacy of such was akin to treason; after the release proved this a lie, however, the memo magically transformed: It was just a dud, they suddenly averred — wholly unworthy of discussion. It could almost make one think the pro-establishment forces and the FBI were afraid of something. But what?

## **What Are the FBI and Its Allies Accused Of?**

Let’s understand the damning allegation at issue here: Just as Nixon used campaign operatives to spy on the opposition party, Barack Obama administration-era Democrats did likewise — except they employed actual government investigatory agencies to do it. As a pretext, the allegation holds, they used that aforementioned dossier, a compilation of reports by shadowy ex-British spy Christopher Steele, who used uncorroborated information provided, ironically, by anonymous Russian sources. The *Washington Examiner* gave us more detail February 2, writing:

- The Steele dossier formed an essential part of the initial and all three renewal FISA applications against Carter Page.
- [Ex-FBI deputy director] Andrew McCabe confirmed that no FISA warrant would have been sought from the FISA Court without the Steele dossier information.
- The four FISA surveillance applications were signed by, in various combinations, [ex-FBI director] James Comey, Andrew McCabe, [then-deputy attorney general] Sally Yates, [ex-DOJ official] Dana Boente, and [deputy attorney general] Rod Rosenstein.
- The FBI authorized payments to Steele for work on the dossier. The FBI terminated its agreement with Steele in late October when it learned, by reading an article in Mother Jones, that Steele was talking to the media.
- The political origins of the Steele dossier were known to senior DOJ and FBI officials, but excluded from the FISA applications.
- DOJ official Bruce Ohr met with Steele beginning in the summer of 2016 and relayed to DOJ information about Steele’s bias. Steele told Ohr that he, Steele, was desperate that Donald Trump not get elected president and was passionate about him not becoming president.

And what fanciful notions did this bias birth? Fox News pundit Tucker Carlson presented a very good analysis of the dossier on the February 13 edition of his show:

After more than a year of probing by politicians and intelligence agencies and journalists, here’s the sum total of what we actually know about the document that started all of this [disruption and investigation]. We know the dossier was compiled by Christopher Steele, acting as a contractor of [commercial research and strategic intelligence firm] Fusion GPS, with funds supplied by the Hillary



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

Clinton campaign and the DNC. The dossier was a form of opposition research designed to be used against Trump in the presidential campaign; it was not an intelligence document — it was “oppo.” The dossier claims that Russian authorities didn’t simply collude with Trump during a 2016 election, the charge you hear a lot about; it also claims that Russian intelligence cultivated Donald Trump as a kind of asset, a kind of one-man sleeper cell for more than five years. Needless to say, there’s no evidence of that.

*Photo: AP Images*

*This article appears in the March 19, 2018, issue of The New American.*

The dossier also claims the Kremlin fed the Trump team intel. reports on Hillary Clinton and other political opponents for years. There’s no proof of that, either.

It claims Trump was favored by Moscow with lucrative Russian real estate deals as part of his cultivation as a political asset, that sleeper cell. No proof there, either.

According to the dossier, Trump and Russia were exchanging intelligence with each other for at least eight years. No proof of that.

The dossier goes on to describe a clandestine meeting in Prague between Trump lawyer Michael Cohen and representatives, supposedly that took place in August of 2016. This is one of the very few claims in the dossier that has been conclusively checked — and it’s false. Cohen wasn’t even outside the US at the time the meeting supposedly took place.

In sum, the Steele dossier is absurd. The closer you read it, the more absurd it is. Take 10 minutes to do so yourself. It’s online. And as you read it, ask yourself who would believe something like this? It’s so transparently partisan and unlikely and stupid and flimsy, it reads like a parody of a badly written spy novel. At the same time he was firing people on *The Apprentice*, Donald Trump was working with Vladimir Putin to subvert America? It’s hard even to say that with a straight face. It’s that stupid.

And yet, keep in mind and never forget, this is the document the FBI used to justify spying on American citizens. These are the claims that Democrats in Congress repeatedly cited as the reason to stop the normal functioning of government in order to investigate the administration. This is the famous dossier that even today progressives in the media are spending millions in an attempt to corroborate. And it’s all a stupid joke. Amazingly, a lot of people in power fell for it.

For sure, “It’s easier to fool people than to convince them they have been fooled,” as the saying goes. The question is: Who in positions of power wanted to do the fooling, and to what end? Well, note that the surveillance of Page meant that the FBI would have been listening in on conversations between him and anyone he interacted with — including *any Trump campaign officials in that orbit*. In other words, a very stupid document can be a pretext for something more sinister than stupid.

So we can see similarities and differences between Watergate and the FISA abuse. Both occurred in the midst of a presidential election campaign. Both involved the executive branch of government spying on members of the opposition party who were seeking the White House, perhaps to gather dirt on them. Both used illegal means to effect that spying. Both involved paying ex-spooks (former CIA agent E. Howard Hunt, for instance, in Nixon’s case) to make mischief. As for the differences, the FISA abuse was perpetrated by government agencies, while the Watergate break-in was the



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

handiwork of the president's campaign operatives. (Of course, if Nixon had FISA at his disposal, he might have been able to weaponize government agencies, too.) Also note that when campaign operatives surveil, it's called spying; when government agencies spy, it's called surveillance.

### **Coordinated Coverup**

As for Watergate, the break-in was the handiwork of a White House special investigations unit established July 24, 1971 and dubbed the "Plumbers," as it was tasked with stopping leaks. (It was actually the second Plumber burglary of the DNC offices, a fateful return trip necessitated by the malfunction of listening devices installed in May 1972.) But Watergate also was, as is said, a case of the coverup being worse than the crime. As History.com writes:

In August [1972], Nixon gave a speech in which he swore that his White House staff was not involved in the break-in. Most voters believed him, and in November 1972 the president was reelected in a landslide victory.

... It later came to light that Nixon was not being truthful. A few days after the break-in, for instance, he arranged to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in "hush money" to the burglars.

Then, Nixon and his aides hatched a plan to instruct the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to impede the FBI's investigation of the crime. This was a more serious crime than the break-in: It was an abuse of presidential power and a deliberate obstruction of justice.

So perhaps there are even more similarities between then and now. Former Clinton associate Dick Morris wrote February 14 that in 2015, Bill and Hillary Clinton gave then-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe's wife, Jill, what Morris describes as a "\$1.2 million bribe." The money was transferred by close Clinton allies to Jill, who was running for the state senate in Virginia (she lost); Morris theorizes that the quid pro quo was that McCabe would try to quash the investigation into Hillary Clinton's mishandling of classified information. As Morris put it, "So we have some of Hillary Clinton's major donors giving over a million dollars to an obscure candidate for a minor Virginia state legislative seat just as the candidate's husband is sitting [in] judgment of Hillary's emails on her private server."

Then there's the matter of the (meant to be secret) 2016 meeting between then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Bill Clinton aboard Lynch's plane on the tarmac at Phoenix's Sky Harbor International Airport. "The following month, then-FBI Director James Comey announced the bureau would not recommend that the Department of Justice pursue charges in the email probe. Comey has testified before Congress that Lynch asked him to refer to the probe as a 'matter,' a request that made him feel 'queasy,'" *Newsweek* reported December 15. The timing certainly was, shall we say, suspicious.

So allegations of bribery, obstruction of justice, and using federal investigatory agencies to achieve political ends, all with the complicity of upper-echelon administration officials and partisans — it all sounds quite "Watergateish." The question is, how high up does this go? In Watergate, there was no question about the president's involvement after the revelation that Nixon taped every conversation in the Oval Office. While his lawyers claimed that executive privilege allowed him to keep the tapes private, this ultimately proved unsuccessful. As History.com further relates:

Early in 1974, the cover-up and efforts to impede the Watergate investigation began to unravel. On March 1, a grand jury appointed by a new special prosecutor indicted seven of Nixon's former aides





Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

on various charges related to the Watergate affair. The jury, unsure if they could indict a sitting president, called Nixon an “unindicted co-conspirator.”

In July, the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to turn over the tapes. While the president dragged his feet, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Nixon for obstruction of justice, abuse of power, criminal cover-up and several violations of the Constitution.

... Finally, on August 5, Nixon released the tapes, which provided undeniable evidence of his complicity in the Watergate crimes. In the face of almost certain impeachment by Congress, Nixon resigned in disgrace on August 8, and left office the following day.

### **Why the Guilty Will Likely Walk**

But what about the current situation? Will another U.S. president ultimately be implicated? Commentator Monica Crowley weighed in on this at *The Hill* February 12, writing:

In all of the discussions about the political weaponization of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI, alleged corruption at the highest echelons of those agencies and serial abuse of the secret FISA process surrounding the 2016 election, one name has been conspicuously absent: President Barack Obama.

High-ranking officials and other major players in those agencies — which Obama oversaw — are increasingly embroiled in the growing scandal: James Comey, Loretta Lynch, Andrew McCabe, [DOJ official and special-counsel team member] Andrew Weissmann, Sally Yates, [anti-Trump FBI agent] Peter Strzok, [FBI attorney and ex-special-counsel team member] Lisa Page, Bruce Ohr.

Given the tight control Obama exercised over every part of his administration and agenda, the idea that any of these appointees and loyalists freelanced their activities without at least his tacit approval or that of his White House strains credulity.

This is entirely logical, but it brings us to some profound differences between the current situation and Watergate. Perhaps a major reason why Nixon fell and Obama survived his presidency is that the leftist media were hostile toward the former (par for the course with Republicans) but were advocates for the latter. Moreover, with our institutions increasingly left-wing and with virtue having diminished everywhere during the last many decades, Obama was enabled by government agencies in a way of which Nixon could only dream. There was no “Woodward and Bernstein” fed information by a Deep Throat, revealed in 2005 to have been then-FBI associate director Mark Felt. Instead, the whole Washington establishment was lined up against what they viewed as a deep threat: the anti-establishment candidacy of Donald Trump.

This brings us to this matter’s scariest aspect. I believe that the Obama administration was so brazen in its misuse of power and weaponization of government (don’t forget the IRS scandal involving the targeting of conservative groups) not just because leftists, being moral relativists/nihilists, are vice-ridden people who believe the ends justify the means. I suspect it’s also because they calculated that, with leftist governmental hegemony on the horizon, they’d never be held accountable.

Remember that the election of Donald Trump, a businessman and reality television star who’d never served in the military or held public office, was perhaps the greatest political upset in American history. Most “experts” thought it impossible. So the Left had every reason to believe that four years of Hillary Clinton further “transforming” our country would lead to another four years of Hillary. Note that this



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

---

would have meant the increasingly accelerated importation of “undocumented Democrats” (left-leaning future voters, generally called immigrants or “refugees”; this had already reached a fever pitch under Obama) and the “Californification” of even more states. The Left already wholly controls the culture-shapers, the media, academia, and entertainment, and I suspect they believed the next eight years would see a tipping point that would also give them a death grip on the executive branch of government — the part of government that *enforces the laws*.

This would have made government lawless. As the French Revolution, the Soviets, the Maoists in China, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia proved, the only limit on leftist tyranny is leftist power. This is something that goes far beyond FISA abuse — and that is certainly worse than Watergate.

*Photo: AP Images*



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 19, 2018

Published in the March 19, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 06

## Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,  
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



**Subscribe**

### What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.