



Did Comey Mislead Congress on Obama Meeting?

“I spoke alone with President Obama twice in person (and never on the phone) — once in 2015 to discuss law enforcement policy issues and a second time, briefly, for him to say goodbye in late 2016,” former FBI Director James Comey (shown) told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on June 8, 2017. This has led many to raise the question of whether Comey misled Congress about a subsequent *secret* meeting Comey had with then-President Barack Obama on January 5, 2017, about two weeks before Donald Trump succeeded him.



Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the chairman of the Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee, announced their discovery of an important e-mail this week.

The disclosure of an e-mail that former Secretary of State Susan Rice strangely wrote to herself just moments after Trump was sworn in on January 20, 2017, that included details of the secret Obama-Comey meeting of January 5 has caused some to question the forthrightness of Comey’s later testimony. While Comey added the word “alone” in reference to his other two meetings with Obama, one could reasonably infer that a *secret* meeting with President Obama on January 5 would have been relevant information for the committee — especially considering that the January 5 meeting considered issues and a personality (Trump) very much pertinent to the present Senate probe.

In her memo to herself, Rice wrote, “On January 5, following a briefing by IC [Intelligence Community] leadership on Russian hacking during the 2016 Presidential election, President Obama had a brief follow-on conversation with FBI Director Jim Comey and Attorney General Sally Yates in the Oval Office. Vice President Biden and I were also present.”

While Comey was not actually *alone* with Obama, it was nevertheless a very select group.

The wording of the e-mail reads like someone wanting to establish that everyone present had only noble intentions, just in case such cover was later needed by those present.

“President Obama began the conversation by stressing his continued commitment to ensuring that every aspect of this issue [alleged Russian interference in the past presidential election] is handled by the Intelligence and law enforcement communities ‘by the book.’ The President stressed that he is not asking about initiating or instructing anything from a law enforcement perspective,” Rice wrote, adding, “He [Obama] reiterated that our law enforcement team needs to proceed as it normally would by the book.”

When one considers that the secret meeting involved allegations against the incoming administration, simply not mentioning such a meeting had to constitute a deliberate attempt on the part of Comey to keep the meeting a secret from the Senate Intelligence Committee. Rice’s unusual memo to herself continued: “From a national security perspective, however, President Obama said he wants to be sure



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that, as we engage with the incoming [Trump] team, we are mindful to ascertain if there is any reason that we cannot share information fully as it relates to Russia.”

Incredibly, Obama was suggesting that the incoming “team,” which was led by the duly-elected president of the United States, should possibly be kept in the dark about information the Intelligence Community had concerning a foreign power!

“The President asked Comey to inform him if anything changes in the next few weeks that should affect how we share classified information with the incoming team,” the Rice self-memo continued. The memo concludes with, “Comey said he would.”

The very next day, Comey met with Trump at Trump Tower in New York. He did not mention any material that he held back from the president-elect. Instead, Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he and other members of the IC briefed Trump “and his new national security team on the findings of an IC assessment concerning Russian efforts to interfere in the election.” According to Comey, he believed it was important to brief Trump about the contents of material, which Comey said was “salacious and unverified.” (This, is of course, was the so-called Russian dossier, which actually included material — now considered false — paid for by the Hillary Clinton campaign.)

This meeting on January 6 between Comey and Trump was detailed for the Senate committee, but the previous day’s meeting with Obama was not. There is also no indication that Comey informed the president-elect about the previous day’s meeting in which the attendees openly discussed how some information about the Russians should not be shared with the incoming president.

Comey told the committee that he assured Trump, “(We) were not investigating him personally.”

The two senators publicly told Rice on Monday, “It strikes us as odd that, among your activities in the final moments on the final day of the Obama administration, you would feel the need to send yourself such an unusual email purporting to document a conversation involving President Obama and his interactions with the FBI regarding the Trump/Russia investigation.”

Clearly, both senators see the e-mail as potentially a way to cover subsequent activities, because they added, “In addition, despite your claim that President Obama repeatedly told Mr. Comey to proceed ‘by the book,’ substantial questions have arisen about whether officials at the FBI, as well as at the Justice Department and the State Department actually did proceed, ‘by the book.’”

If Comey’s failure to inform Congress of the January 5 meeting, Rice’s memo, and the use of “salacious and unverified” material paid for by the opposing political party’s candidate in order to obtain a FISA warrant is “by the book,” it would appear that perhaps it is time for a new “book” for the American Intelligence Community.

And Comey, Rice, and maybe even Obama himself should appear before Congress to answer questions about this troubling episode.

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