



The FISA Memo: “Worse Than Watergate”

The abuse of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) by senior Obama administration officials is “worse than Watergate.” So [said](#) House Judiciary Committee member Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa; shown) in January. King based his comments on his reading of the FISA memo, whose much anticipated release to the public occurred Friday. And since Watergate led to history’s only resignation of an American president, we should ask: is King’s pronouncement risible or right? Let’s contrast and compare.



For a brief history, courtesy of [History.com](#), the “Watergate scandal began early in the morning of June 17, 1972, when several burglars were arrested in the office of the Democratic National Committee, located in the Watergate complex of buildings in Washington, D.C. This was no ordinary robbery: The prowlers were connected to President Richard Nixon’s reelection campaign, and they had been caught wiretapping phones and stealing documents.”

As for current events, the FISA memo relates the surveillance of former Donald Trump campaign advisor Carter Page. As Bloomberg [reports](#), the “memo says that the FBI presented an opposition research dossier as evidence to a secret court for warrants to spy on Page beginning in October 2016. The bureau did not tell the court that this dossier was paid for by the Democratic Party and the Hillary Clinton campaign through cutouts. Senior officials at the bureau and the Justice Department knew all of this, but declined to tell the judge who approved the warrant, according to the memo.”

The dossier was a compilation of reports by ex-British spy Christopher Steele, who used uncorroborated information provided, ironically, by anonymous Russian sources. The *Washington Examiner* gives us more detail, [writing](#):

- The Steele dossier formed an essential part of the initial and all three renewal FISA applications against Carter Page.
- 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, James Comey, Andrew McCabe, Sally Yates, Dana Boente, and 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



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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.

Note that Steele was also funded by the Hillary Clinton campaign.

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 member[s] 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-spies (ex-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 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.

Another difference is that Nixon took aggressive steps to cover up the crime afterwards, which led to his downfall. In the FISA-abuse case, we don't yet know if Barack Obama will be implicated.

There's another notable fact: Whomever Page communicated with — which could have included Trump campaign officials — would have gotten caught up in the surveillance as well. Moreover, more information will be released in the future, which may or may not point to even wider surveillance.

The new information may include the Democrats' "perspective" on the FISA court application, mind you. Of course, the Democrats don't exactly have great credibility here. They just spent a week lying to the American people, claiming the "memo was full of 'classified information' and releasing it would expose 'our spying methods,'" as *FrontPage Mag's* Daniel Greenfield [put it](#). He then wryly opined, "By 'our,' they didn't mean American spying methods. They meant Obama's spying methods."

Greenfield later wrote that the "Clinton campaign had enlisted figures in the FBI and the DOJ to manipulate an election. The coup against America operated as a 'state within a state' inside the United States government." If this is true, the FISA abuse is indeed far, far worse than Watergate.

Below is a very good summation of the FISA memo's contents by Fox News' Tucker Carlson.

Photo of Rep. Steve King: AP Images



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