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# What Devin Nunes Knows

Team Obama was spying broadly on the incoming administration.



Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. Devin Nunes in the U.S. Capitol, March 24. PHOTO: REUTERS



By

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California Rep. Adam Schiff may not offer much by way of substance, but give him marks for political flimflam. The ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee was so successful at ginning up fake outrage over his Republican counterpart that he successfully buried this week's only real (and bombshell) news.

Mr. Schiff and fellow Democrats spent this week accusing Chairman Devin Nunes of carrying water for President Trump, undermining the committee's Russia investigation, and hiding information. The press dutifully regurgitated the outrage, as well as Mr. Schiff's calls for Mr. Nunes to recuse himself from the investigation into possible Russian electoral meddling.

All this engineered drama served to deep-six the important information Americans urgently deserve to know. Mr. Nunes has said he has seen proof that the Obama White House surveilled the

incoming administration—on subjects that had nothing to do with Russia—and that it further unmasked (identified by name) transition officials. This goes far beyond a mere scandal. It’s a potential crime.

We’ve known since early February that a call by former national security adviser Mike Flynn to the Russian ambassador was monitored by U.S. intelligence. There’s nothing improper in tapping foreign officials. But it *was* improper that Mr. Flynn’s name was revealed and leaked to the press, along with the substance of his conversation. The media nonetheless excused all this by claiming one piece of Mr. Flynn’s conversation (sanctions) was relevant to the continuing investigation into Trump-Russia ties.

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Around the same time, Mr. Nunes’s own intelligence sources informed him that documents showed further collection of information about, and unmasking of, Trump transition officials. These documents aren’t easily obtainable, since they aren’t the “finished” intelligence products that Congress gets to see. Nonetheless, for weeks Mr. Nunes has been demanding intelligence agencies turn over said documents—with no luck, so far.

Mr. Nunes earlier this week got his own source to show him a treasure trove of documents at a secure facility. Here are the relevant details:

First, there were dozens of documents with information about Trump officials. Second, the information these documents contained was not related to Russia. Third, while many reports did “mask” identities (referring, for instance, to “U.S. Person 1 or 2”) they were written in

ways that made clear which Trump officials were being discussed. Fourth, in at least one instance, a Trump official other than Mr. Flynn was outright unmasked. Finally, these documents were circulated at the highest levels of government.

To sum up, Team Obama was spying broadly on the incoming administration.

Mr. Schiff's howls about Mr. Nunes's methods are bluster; the Republican was doing his job, and well. Mr. Nunes has spent years cultivating whistleblowers and sources as part of his oversight responsibilities, and that network scored him information that has otherwise remained hidden. It isn't clear if the White House itself attempted to obtain these documents, but even if it did, the Senate has confirmed few Trump political appointees, which means there aren't many loyal staffers among the Obama holdovers to attempt it. It's also possible the Trump White House was wary of making such a demand, since it would inevitably leak. The last thing the administration wants is wild speculation that it was interfering with the FBI's Russia probe.

Meantime, few things match the ludicrous furor over Mr. Nunes's source-meeting place, or his visit to brief Mr. Trump. Congress members must view most classified material on executive-branch grounds, since that's the only way to access it physically. Having discovered the former administration's surveillance of Trump officials, Mr. Nunes had a duty to let the White House know. (Imagine if he'd sat on it.) He could hardly let Democrats know first, since their only interest these days is in leaking and twisting stories. And the reason he held press briefings before and after his meeting with Mr. Trump was to be transparent about his purpose.

Hint to the press corps: If Mr. Nunes wanted to tip off the White House about his Russia probe, it'd be a lot easier to speed-dial Steve Bannon secretly from his office.

If Mr. Schiff wants to be trusted with important information, he might start by proving he is trustworthy—rather than rumor-mongering that there is “more than circumstantial evidence” of Trump-Russia collusion. He might voice some concern that a prior White House was monitoring its political opponents. He might ask whether Obama officials had been “reverse monitoring”—tracking foreign officials solely so they could spy on the Trump team.

Mr. Nunes has zero reason to recuse himself from this probe, because he is doing his job. It's Mr. Schiff who ought to be considering recusal, for failing to do his own.

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