

Russiagate Narrative Undercut by Nunes Memo

The key allegations of election meddling at the heart of Russiagate continue to lack supporting evidence, while on the other hand, evidence of overreach by investigators undermines the narrative of Trump-Russia collusion, reports Philip Giraldi.

By Philip Giraldi

The so-called Nunes Memo prepared for the Republican majority on the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee – even if possibly overblown – provides strong reason to believe that there was unwarranted and quite possibly illegal FBI surveillance of a former Trump staffer over completely legal Russian business dealings. Meanwhile, regarding the key allegations of election meddling at the heart of Russiagate, the nine month-long investigation of Special Counsel Robert Mueller into Moscow's possible interference has so far only shown that it was Israel rather than Russia that meddled with the campaign by meeting with Trump associates and seeking favors.

Notably missing is any evidence that the Russian government did anything beyond the usual probing that intelligence agencies worldwide do when confronted by important developments in another country that is either a competitor or adversary.

An aspect of the Republican memo that has been scarcely commented upon in the avalanche of news reporting centered on the story is how the mainstream media is continuing to exercise a dangerous obsession with Russia and is insisting that the Russiagate inquiry should continue even more aggressively in spite of the concerns that the entire process has been politicized. There is nothing in the memo itself that indicates that Moscow actually tried to recruit any Trump associate as an agent or interfere in the U.S. election. The *raison d'être* for both the Congressional and Special Counsel Robert Mueller investigations therefore appears to be lacking. It might eventually emerge that Russia did little or even nothing beyond the usual probing and nosing around that intelligence agencies routinely do.

President Donald Trump, who had campaigned on a sensible pledge to seek better relations with Moscow, has provided only feeble resistance to the onslaught of the media and political class. He has recently allowed the Justice Department and Treasury to punish Russia's two major news outlets operating in the United States, RT America and Sputnik. They both have been forced to register as

foreign agents, even though no other non-American news service operating in the United States has been compelled to do the same, while new allegations about perfidious Moscow surface weekly.

Two recent news reports illustrate perfectly just how out-of-control the Russia inquiry has become. At the end of January, the U.S. Treasury Department released the names of 210 alleged Kremlin insiders, including government ministers, who were being included on a list for possible sanctions, though it was also announced that no sanctions would be put in place pending further ongoing review of the behavior of those individuals under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

The so-called "Kremlin List" was clearly designed to put pressure on the inner circle of the Russian government as many of those named have major business ties with the United States and Western Europe that could be severely damaged through sanctions. The intention may have been to encourage those individuals to lessen their support for President Vladimir Putin in the upcoming Russian national elections on March 18.

The Kremlin List has significantly impacted internal Russian politics ahead of a major election and therefore could be seen as the U.S.'s own attempt at election-meddling. It comes on top of a British government claim that Moscow intends to rip British "infrastructure apart, actually cause thousands and thousands and thousands of deaths," and create "total chaos within the country," as well as a U.S. Senate report that alleges a two decade-long assault by Putin "on democratic institutions, universal values, and the rule of law across Europe and in his own country."

The second story, which is more bizarre than the first, describes how Congressman Adam Schiff told a University of Pennsylvania audience that Russian-promoted ads during the 2016 election encouraged people to exercise their Second Amendment rights to own guns. Per Schiff, "the Russians would be thrilled if we were doing nothing but killing each other very day, and sadly we are." So now the Russians, apparently, are responsible not only for Donald Trump getting elected, but also for the U.S. epidemic of gun violence.

Neither Congressman Schiff's meanderings nor the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act serve any conceivable United States national interest – and the Nunes Memo demonstrates, if anything, that the evidence for Russian interference in the U.S. election is elusive at best.

If the alleged Russiagate conspiracy is never actually demonstrated, which looks increasingly likely, it would certainly disappoint the many American talking heads and media "experts" who have been building careers off of bashing Moscow

24/7, but it might also provide a window for the White House to fulfill its electoral promise to fix the Russia relationship.

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