

RAY McGOVERN: Ex-FBI, CIA Officials Draw Withering Fire on Russiagate

The Deep State almost always wins. But if Attorney General Barr leans hard on Trump to unfetter investigators, all hell may break loose, says Ray McGovern.

By **Ray McGovern**

Special to Consortium News



As Congress arrives back into town and the House Judiciary and Intelligence Committees prepare to question ex-Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller on July 17, partisan lines are being drawn even more sharply, as Russias-gate blossoms into Deep-State-gate. On Sunday, a top Republican legislator, Rep. Peter King (R-NY) took the gloves off in an unusually acerbic public attack on former leaders of the FBI and CIA.

King **told** a radio audience: “There is no doubt to me there was severe, serious abuses that were carried out in the FBI and, I believe, top levels of the CIA against the President of the United States or, at that time, presidential candidate Donald Trump,” according to *The Hill*.

King, a senior congressman specializing in national security, twice chaired the House Homeland Security Committee and currently heads its Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. He also served for several years on the House Intelligence Committee.

He asserted:

“There was no legal basis at all for them to begin this

investigation of his campaign – and the way they carried it forward, and the way information was leaked. ... All of this is going to come out. It's going to show the bias. It's going to show the baselessness of the investigation ... and I would say the same thing if this were done to Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders ...It's just wrong."

The Long Island Republican added a well aimed swipe at what passes for the media today: "The media went along with this – actually, keeping this farcical, ridiculous thought going that the President of the United States... was somehow involved in a conspiracy with Russia against his own country."

According to King, the Justice Department's review, ordered by Attorney General William Barr, would prove that former officials acted improperly. He was alluding to the investigation led by John Durham, U.S. Attorney in Connecticut. Sounds nice. But waiting for Durham to complete his investigation at a typically lawyerly pace would, I fear, be much like the experience of waiting for Mueller to finish his; that is, like waiting for Godot. What about now?

So Where is the IG Report on FISA?

That's the big one. If Horowitz is able to speak freely about what he has learned, his report could lead to indictments of former CIA Director John Brennan, former FBI Director James Comey, former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, former Deputy Attorneys General Sally Yates and Rod Rosenstein, and Dana Boente – Boente being the only signer of the relevant FISA applications still in office. (No, he has not been demoted to file clerk in the FBI library; at

last report, he is FBI General Counsel!).

The DOJ inspector General's investigation, launched in March 2018, has centered on whether the FBI and DOJ filing of four FISA applications and renewals beginning in October 2016 to surveil former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page amounted to abuse of the FISA process. (Fortunately for the IG, Obama's top intelligence and law enforcement officials were so sure that Hillary Clinton would win that they did not do much to hide their tracks.)

The Washington Examiner reported last Tuesday, "The Justice Department inspector general's investigation of potential abuse of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is complete, a Republican congressman said, though a report on its findings might not be released for a month." The report continued:

"House Judiciary Committee member John Ratcliffe (R, Texas) said Monday he'd met with DOJ watchdog Michael Horowitz last week about his FISA abuse report. In a media interview, Ratcliffe said they'd discussed the timing, but not the content of his report and Horowitz 'related that his team's investigative work is complete and they're now in the process of drafting that report. Ratcliffe said he was doubtful that Horowitz's report would be made available to the public or the Congress anytime soon. 'He [Horowitz] did relay that as much as 20% of his report is going to include classified information, so that draft report will have to undergo a classification review at the FBI and at the Department of Justice,' Ratcliffe said. 'So, while I'm hopeful that we members of Congress might

see it before the August recess, I'm not too certain about that.'”

Earlier, Horowitz had predicted that his report would be ready in May or June but there may, in fact, be good reason for some delay. Fox News reported Friday that “key witnesses sought for questioning by Justice Department Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz early in his investigation into alleged government surveillance abuse have come forward at the 11th hour.” According to Fox’s sources, at least one witness outside the Justice Department and FBI has started cooperating – a breakthrough that came after Durham was assigned to lead a separate investigation into the origins of the FBI’s 2016 Russia case that led to Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s probe.

“Classification,” however, has been one of the Deep State’s favorite tactics to stymie investigations – especially when the material in question yields serious embarrassment or reveals crimes. And the stakes this time are huge.

Judging by past precedent, Deep State intelligence and law enforcement officials will do all they can to use the “but-it’s-classified” excuse to avoid putting themselves and their former colleagues in legal jeopardy. (Though this would violate Obama’s executive order 13526, prohibiting classification of embarrassing or criminal information).

It is far from clear that DOJ IG Horowitz and Attorney General Barr will prevail in the end, even though President Trump has given Barr nominal authority to declassify as necessary. Why are the the stakes so extraordinarily high?

What Did Obama Know, and When Did He Know It?

Recall that in a Sept. 2, 2016 text message to the FBI's then-deputy chief of counterintelligence Peter Strzok, his girlfriend and then-top legal adviser to Deputy FBI Director McCabe, Lisa Page, wrote that she was preparing talking points because the president "*wants to know everything we're doing.*" [Emphasis added.] It does not seem likely that the Director of National Intelligence, DOJ, FBI, and CIA all kept President Obama in the dark about their FISA and other machinations – although it is possible they did so out of a desire to provide him with "plausible denial."

It seems more likely that Obama's closest intelligence confidant, Brennan, told him about the shenanigans with FISA, that Obama gave him approval (perhaps just tacit approval), and that Brennan used that to harness top intelligence and law enforcement officials behind the effort to defeat Trump and, later, to emasculate and, if possible, remove him.

Moreover, one should not rule out seeing in the coming months an "Obama-made-us-do-it" defense – whether grounded in fact or not – by Brennan and perhaps the rest of the gang. Brennan may even have a piece of paper recording the President's "approval" for this or that – or could readily have his former subordinates prepare one that appears authentic.

Reining in Devin Nunes

That the Deep State retains formidable power can be seen in the repeated Lucy-holding-then-withdrawing-the-football-for-Charlie Brown treatment experienced by House Intelligence

Committee Ranking Member, Devin Nunes (R-CA). On April 5, 2019, in the apparent belief he had a green light to go on the offensive, Nunes wrote that committee Republicans “will soon be submitting criminal referrals on numerous individuals involved ... in the abuse of intelligence for political purposes. These people must be held to account to prevent similar abuses from occurring in the future.”

On April 7, Nunes was even more specific, telling Fox News that he was preparing to send eight criminal referrals to the Department of Justice “this week,” concerning alleged misconduct during the Trump-Russia investigation, including leaks of “highly classified material” and conspiracies to lie to Congress and the FISA court. It seemed to be no-holds-barred for Nunes, who had begun to talk publicly about prison time for those who might be brought to trial.

Except for Fox, the corporate media ignored Nunes’s explosive comments. The media seemed smugly convinced that Nunes’s talk of “referrals” could be safely ignored – even though a new sheriff, Barr, had come to town. And sure enough, now, three months later, where are the criminal referrals?

There is ample evidence that President Trump is afraid to run afoul of the Deep State functionaries he inherited. And the Deep State almost always wins. But if Attorney General Barr leans hard on the president to unfetter Nunes, IG Horowitz, Durham and like-minded investigators, all hell may break loose, because the evidence against those who took serious liberties with the law is staring them all in the face.

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. No fan of the current President, Ray has been trained to follow and analyze the facts, wherever they may lead. He spent 27 years as a CIA analyst, and prepared the President's Daily Brief for three presidents. In retirement he co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

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