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Barr Confirms Multiple Intel Agencies Implicated In Harassment of Citizens In Domestic Spy Operation

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 Mollie Hemingway

By [Mollie Hemingway](#)

"Spying on a political campaign is a big deal," Attorney General William Barr told a Senate committee on Wednesday morning. Barr's comments came in the context of potential Justice Department reviews of the Trump-Russia investigation and how it began in 2016.

While it is important that the top law enforcement in the United States publicly acknowledged that the Obama administration and its intelligence agencies surveilled its domestic political opponents during the heat of a presidential election, it is what he said next that was most startling: that the CIA and other federal agencies in addition to the FBI may have been involved. "I'm not talking about the FBI necessarily, but intelligence agencies more broadly," he said.

The FBI, which has incredibly friendly relations with the media, has taken the brunt of the public outcry against the anti-Trump operation. That project included the use of Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrants, national security letters, human informants, and strategic leaking to craft a narrative of treasonous collusion with Russia to steal an election from Hillary

Clinton. It even included leaks of classified records from former FBI director James Comey, which he said was done for the purpose of launching a special counsel investigation as retaliation for his firing.

There have always been indications that the operation went far beyond the FBI, however. For example, former CIA director John Brennan, now an MSNBC contributor, separately briefed Sen. Harry Reid, (D-Nev.) about the operation. Reid understood that move was undertaken so he could publicize the Russia investigation to [influence the ongoing presidential election campaign](#).

Former director of national intelligence James Clapper, now a CNN contributor, [admitted to discussions with media outlets](#) about the investigation. The U.S. embassy in London was used [contrary to established protocol](#) to funnel hearsay that was used as a pretext to officially launch a wide-ranging investigation against the entire Trump orbit. Clinton-connected officials in the State Department were also used to [disseminate unverified gossip](#) and allegations about Trump throughout the federal government.

The use of covert individuals to surreptitiously obtain information on private American citizens and share it with the government is the most obvious publicly known indication that agencies beyond the FBI may have been intimately involved in the operation. It is clearly possible that every single instance of intelligence collection was done entirely by the FBI without any assistance from any other federal intelligence agency. However, that has not been determined by any investigative body.

The use of Stefan Halper, for example, a London-based American academic with longstanding ties to the FBI, CIA, and Defense Department, raises serious questions about whether CIA assets or resources were used against American citizens. Following Nixon-era domestic spying abuses by the U.S. intelligence community, oversight bodies [restricted the authority of the CIA to spy on U.S. citizens on U.S. soil.](#)

Numerous Trump affiliates were lured to meetings overseas that were then used as the basis for domestic intelligence collection. The formal launch of an enterprise investigation against the Trump campaign was opened following a report that George Papadopoulos, a former Trump campaign advisor, had told a foreign diplomat in London about another overseas meeting during which he was told Russians had dirt on Clinton.

The Washington Post's Aaron Blake is representative of the media's award-winning complicity in furthering a baseless conspiracy theory of Russian collusion and concealing the troubling behavior of their most prized sources:

It is discrediting to Blake to cite Clapper, a man who [famously lied to Congress](#) about the mass surveillance of American citizens, as a trustworthy source of information on the government's domestic spying operations. The media's attempt to claim that the covert surveillance of and collection of information on American citizens tied to the Trump campaign does not constitute "spying" is as absurd today as it was when they first started attempting to claim that a year ago after it was revealed that the FBI had used an overseas intelligence asset in its anti-Trump operation.

The Times headline about the use of government agents to secretly gather evidence against the Trump campaign was — hand to God — ["F.B.I. Used Informant to Investigate Russia Ties to Campaign, Not to Spy, as Trump Claims."](#)

It's also false to pretend that the surveillance only occurred against Carter Page and only after he left the campaign, referring to the year-long FISA warrant the FBI and DOJ used against the innocent American citizen using discredited Clinton-campaign research as a basis. That's wrong on multiple counts. According to The New York Times' [government leakers](#):

The F.B.I. investigated four unidentified Trump campaign aides in those early months, congressional investigators revealed in February. The four men were Michael T. Flynn, Paul Manafort, Carter Page and Mr. Papadopoulos, current and former officials said...

The F.B.I. obtained phone records and other documents using national security letters — a secret type of subpoena — officials said. And at least one government informant met several times with Mr. Page and Mr. Papadopoulos, current and former officials said.

Furthermore, even Page's FISA surveillance allowed U.S. authorities to surveil not just Page but those he was in contact with, including campaign officials, and to search electronic communications sent and received long before the FISA warrant application was initially approved.

The fact of the matter is that federal intelligence agencies spied on a rival political campaign. They illegally leaked information about that surveillance. They abused their authority to at best undermine the duly elected president and at worst to attempt a soft coup against him. They did so with the near-total cooperation of the American media establishment.

This is a scandal of epic proportions. It is one that threatens the foundations of constitutional government. It is a direct attack on American democracy.

If it is true, as the Washington Post asserts, that democracy dies in darkness, then every single improper deed done under the cloak of secrecy must be fully brought to light. The only way to restore the definitively lost credibility of the FBI and other

intelligence agencies is through a thorough investigation of what happened, who was involved, and how they will be held accountable.

Sean Davis contributed to this report.

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