

Democrats' Claims About Spying on President Trump Don't Add Up

Our friend, Fred Fleitz, a former CIA analyst and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence staffer, who has actually handled “unmasking” requests for a policymaker, has a great piece on Fox explaining why the claims of Obama’s former National Security Adviser Susan Rice that the Obama administration did not spy on Mr. Trump or his staff for political purposes don’t add up.

Fleitz points out that the names of U.S. citizens “incidentally” mentioned in NSA reports are masked to preserve their identities because America’s intelligence agencies are barred from spying on American citizens except in extraordinary circumstances with court approval.

Rice said in an interview with MSNBC’s Andrea Mitchell that policymakers sometimes request to know the identities of Americans from NSA reports to understand these reports in certain circumstances, which is correct says Fleitz.

She also tried to dismiss this controversy by claiming NSA demasking requests are routine.

This is false said Fleitz; they are not actually routine and are taken very seriously by NSA.

Rice also told Andrea Mitchell there is an Intelligence Community process to review whether to approve demasking requests. This, claims Fleitz, seemed to be an attempt by Rice to make her requests look legitimate because NSA carefully reviewed them.

In fact, this review is pro forma, noted Fleitz. If a senior

official gives what appears to be a national security reason, demasking requests are almost always approved.

In his article for Fox Fred Fleitz observes that Rice's interview came amid a growing controversy that the Obama administration abused U.S. intelligence to spy on the Trump campaign and leak intelligence to the press to hurt Trump.

Also factor in says Fleitz, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes' disclosure in a March 22 press conference that the names of Trump campaign or transition officials were demasked from NSA reports that had nothing to do with Russia or alleged wrongdoing by the Trump campaign.

Bloomberg reporter Eli Lake confirmed this in a bombshell April 3 report in which he said the demasked reports "contained valuable political information on the Trump transition." Lake also broke the story that it was Rice asked for the demaskings in this report.

An April 3 Daily Caller report that Rice ordered U.S. spy agencies to produce "detailed spreadsheets" of legal phone calls involving Donald Trump and his aides when he was running for president makes this story more interesting. Rice denied this allegation during her MSNBC interview, but it has been confirmed by other sources.

It is hard to fathom how the demasking of multiple Trump campaign and transition officials was not politically motivated. While it was legal for her to do this, notes Fleitz, it was highly unethical and would be a huge scandal if a Republican senior official sought the names of Democratic political opponents from U.S. intelligence reports.

From our perspective that's the key point in Fred Fleitz's excellent review of the facts known about Susan Rice's role in the unmasking of the Trump campaign and transition team names.

But there's another piece of the puzzle we want to add that

reinforces Fleitz's analysis.

Most of America knows Susan Rice as an Obama appointee, especially as ambassador to the U.N., where she became infamous as the apologist for the Benghazi cover-up.

In the aftermath of the Benghazi cover-up Republicans shot down Rice's nomination to succeed Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, so her consolation prize (which also put her beyond the reach of the Benghazi Committee congressional investigators) was the appointment as Obama's National Security Adviser.

However, Susan Rice first rose to prominence in the Bill Clinton administration, and in addition to her deep antagonism to Republicans for depriving her of the Secretary of State position, Rice has a long and intimate history with Bill and Hillary Clinton.

As Obama's U.N. ambassador, she worked closely with Hillary Clinton, but Susan Rice began her government career on the staff of Bill Clinton's National Security Council and later served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during Clinton's second term, where she oversaw Clinton's failed "pivot to Africa."

It is worth noting in the context of this long relationship between Susan Rice and the Clintons that the pace of Rice's unmasking requests appears to have picked up in July 2016, which roughly coincides with Donald Trump's nomination and the stepped-up pace of Hillary Clinton's charges of collusion between Team Trump and the Russians.

Rice's denials don't add up concludes Fleitz, who guesses that Rice's demasking requests were on behalf of the Obama National Security Council and were part of a broad campaign that began in early 2016 to abuse U.S. intelligence to hurt the Trump candidacy and then his presidency, and knowing what we know about Susan Rice we agree.

For a more detailed explanation of why Susan Rice's denials don't add up see Fred Fleitz's "Former CIA Analyst: Susan Rice's NSA demasking denials don't add up" on . {eo}

George Rasley is editor of Richard Viguerie's . A veteran of over 300 political campaigns, he served on the staff of Vice President Dan Quayle and as spokesman for Rep. Mac Thornberry now-Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee when Mr. Thornberry served on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

This article was originally published at . Used with permission.