

NEW YORK

MAGAZINE

Trump Asks Congress to Investigate Obama Over Wiretap That White House Refuses to Provide Evidence For

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March 5, 2017

President Trump is asking Congress to investigate his own seemingly baseless allegation that President Obama ordered a wiretap on him in the run up to the 2016 election, despite the fact that the White House is refusing to provide any evidence that such a wiretap even happened. Press Secretary Sean Spicer, in a statement released Sunday morning, instead insisted that “reports concerning potentially politically motivated investigations immediately ahead of the 2016 election are very troubling,” though he, like Trump, did not cite any sources for that claim. Thus far, the only original reports making the wiretap allegation have been a Breitbart, Infowars, and Sean Hannity–amplified conspiracy theory put forward by a conservative radio host, and Trump’s Saturday morning tweetstorm, which was likely referencing the same theory. Nonetheless, Spicer says that President Trump is “requesting that as part of their investigation into Russian activity, the congressional intelligence committees exercise their oversight authority to determine whether executive branch investigative powers were abused in 2016.” He then says that “neither the White House or the president will comment further until such oversight is conducted.”

President Obama’s spokesperson has categorically denied the allegation that Obama ordered a wiretap on Trump, or any other American, during his presidency. The Obama administration’s former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper Jr. further added on *Meet the Press* Sunday that, to his knowledge, there were no secret intelligence warrants regarding Trump or his campaign to begin with. News also broke on Sunday afternoon that FBI Director James Comey reportedly thinks Trump’s claim is false and he has been trying to get the Department of Justice to publicly rebuke the president — though that effort appears to have failed.

Newsmax’s Christopher Ruddy wrote on Sunday that he twice spoke with Trump about the wiretaps on Saturday, confirming that he hadn’t “seen [Trump] this pissed off in a long time.” Continued Ruddy, “When I mentioned Obama ‘denials’ about the wiretaps, [Trump] shot back: ‘This will be investigated, it will all come out. I will be proven right.’”

House Intelligence Committee Chair Devin Nunes — who has said that requests to investigate the potential ties between the Trump campaign and Russia are “almost like McCarthyism

revisited” — responded in the affirmative to Trump’s request on Sunday. The GOP congressman insisted in a statement that the U.S. government’s response to possible Russian interference in the 2016 election was already one of the focus points of the committee’s investigation, and that they will “make inquiries into whether the government was conducting surveillance activities on any political party’s campaign officials or surrogates” and will “continue to investigate this issue if evidence warrants it.”

On the Sunday morning political-show circuit, White House spokesperson Sarah Huckabee Sanders, appearing on ABC’s *This Week*, also declined to provide details about what reports Spicer was referencing, instead misleadingly alluding to the same inconclusive stories that the original conspiracy theory was based on. “Let’s find out, let’s have an investigation,” Sanders proposed, further claiming that “if [the Obama-ordered wiretap] happened, if this is accurate,” it would be “the greatest overreach and the greatest abuse of power that I think we have ever seen and a huge attack on democracy itself.”

Pressed by host Martha Raddatz to account for why Trump would say the wiretaps had happened when it now seems clear there is no definitive evidence to support that claim, Sanders unconvincingly explained that, “I think he’s going off of information that he has seen that had led him to believe that this is a very real potential[.]”

This additional exchange was particularly telling, as well:

RADDATZ: Well, what about these accusations? You keep saying, if, if, if. The President of the United States said it was a fact. He didn’t say I read a story in Breitbart or “The New York Times” or wherever else. He said, just found out that Obama had my wires tapped in Trump Tower. That’s not an if.

SANDERS: Look, I – I will let the president speak for himself. But in terms of where we are in the White House, our ask –

RADDATZ: You’re his spokesperson.

SANDERS: And I’m speaking about it right now.

RADDATZ: But you’re backing off of it. You’re backing off of it.

SANDERS: How am I backing off of it while I’m saying that I think that this happened –

RADDATZ: Because you’re saying if.

The lack of clarity from the White House is not surprising considering the reports that Trump aides were themselves surprised by Trump’s allegations on Saturday. There was then radio silence from the White House for an entire day, though the New York Times and Washington Post report that, according to administration sources, White House counsel Donald McGahn is now trying to obtain evidence that FISA warrant had been issued to tap Trump, should that evidence even exist. However, that inquiry in itself might be an unprecedented act of White House interference in an ongoing Justice Department investigation.

Pressed by the media and GOP lawmakers to back up Trump's very serious allegations against Obama, the White House has chosen simply to express alarm over the president's report without making any credible attempt to explain it, while simultaneously continuing to suggest that President Obama ordered a Watergate-level illegal investigation, and then pass the buck to Congress to confirm whether or not that even happened.

Lastly, for a good analysis of the scattered reports that underpin the Breitbart-boosted wiretap theory, read [this Just Security post](#) from the Cato Institute's Julian Sanchez. His conclusion is that "both Breitbart and Trump have advanced claims far more dramatic than anything the public evidence can support," though, in his libertarian opinion, Congress might as well take a look just in case:

[I]ntelligence monitoring—whether direct or indirect—of persons connected with a presidential campaign inherently carries a high risk of abuse, and as Congress moves to launch its own inquiries into the Trump campaign's Russian ties, it would be entirely appropriate to further scrutinize both the FBI's initial surveillance and applications and the surveillance that was ultimately conducted for any signs of impropriety. In the meantime, it might behoove the Commander in Chief to refrain from issuing serious and inflammatory accusations based wholly on "intelligence" gleaned from Breitbart News.

It's also worth noting, however, that Trump might not ultimately like the outcome of the very investigation he is calling for. That's because if he's right that FISA warrants were issued to investigate him or his campaign, that likely happened for a good, legally supported reason, and independent of any alleged Obama order. *Wired's* Brian Barrett, as part of [his excellent explainer](#) on the FISA process and how it might have come into play regarding the Trump-Russia investigation, cautions that Trump's wiretap claims "carry presumably inadvertent implications":

First, based on previous reporting and the nature of FISA courts, any wiretaps within Trump Tower would be legal. And they would stem from overwhelming evidence that the Trump campaign, or someone within it, has unsavory ties to Russia or another foreign power. Otherwise, it's unlikely those wiretaps would exist at all.

If federal authorities did have cause to listen in on Trump Tower, though, and they provided enough evidence for a FISA court to approve the snooping, Obama is not the one who ought to worry.