

# BREAKING: Trump: 'Obama wiretapped my phone': Obama accused of 'plotting silent coup'

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The swirling battle in Washington over President Trump's desire for a detente with Russia has just taken a dramatic twist with President Trump's disclosure in an extraordinary series of tweets that back in October – just before the election – US President Obama had Trump's office in Trump Tower tapped.

The President has also disclosed that a court initially refused Obama's request for a warrant to have Trump Tower tapped, though a renewed request was later granted.

This means that the wiretap was legal, and that the Obama administration presented some evidence to the court, which the court accepted, that there were legitimate grounds for the wiretap. In the event the wiretap found nothing.

Details of what happened have been provided by conservative radio host Mark Levin in comments which were almost certainly sourced from the White House (probably from Steve Bannon) and which have been expanded in an [article](#) in Breitbart News. Mark Levin's timeline is as follows

**1. June 2016: FISA request.** *The Obama administration [files a request](#) with the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA) to monitor communications involving Donald Trump and several advisers. The request, uncharacteristically, is denied.*

**2. July: Russia joke.** *Wikileaks releases emails from the Democratic National Committee that show an effort to prevent Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) from winning the presidential nomination. In a press conference, Donald Trump refers to Hillary Clinton's own missing emails, joking: "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 e-mails that are missing." That remark becomes the basis for accusations by Clinton and the media that Trump invited further hacking.*

**3. October: Podesta emails.** *In October, Wikileaks releases the emails of Clinton campaign chair John Podesta, rolling out batches every day until the election, creating new mini-scandals. The Clinton campaign blames Trump and the Russians.*

**4. October: FISA request.** *The Obama administration submits a new, narrow request to the FISA court, now focused on a computer server in Trump Tower suspected of links to Russian banks. No evidence is found — but the wiretaps continue, ostensibly for national security reasons, Andrew McCarthy at National Review later [notes](#). The Obama administration is now monitoring an opposing presidential campaign using the high-tech surveillance powers of the federal intelligence services.*

**5. January 2017: BuzzFeed/CNN dossier.** *[Buzzfeed releases, and CNN reports](#), a supposed intelligence "dossier" compiled by a foreign former spy. It purports to show continuous contact between Russia and the Trump campaign, and says that the Russians have compromising information about Trump. None of the allegations can be verified and some are proven false. Several media outlets claim that they had been aware of the dossier for months and that it had been circulating in Washington.*

**6. January: Obama expands NSA sharing.** As Michael Walsh later [notes](#), and as the New York Times reports, the outgoing Obama administration “expanded the power of the National Security Agency to share globally intercepted personal communications with the government’s 16 other intelligence agencies before applying privacy protections.” The new powers, and reduced protections, could make it easier for intelligence on private citizens to be circulated improperly or leaked.

**7. January: Times report.** The New York Times [reports](#), on the eve of Inauguration Day, that several agencies — the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Treasury Department are monitoring several associates of the Trump campaign suspected of Russian ties. Other news outlets also report the existence of “a multiagency working group to coordinate investigations across the government,” though it is unclear how they found out, since the investigations would have been secret and involved classified information.

**8. February: Mike Flynn scandal.** Reports emerge that the FBI intercepted a conversation in 2016 between future National Security Adviser Michael Flynn — then a private citizen — and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. The intercept supposedly was part of routine spying on the ambassador, not monitoring of the Trump campaign. The FBI transcripts reportedly show the two discussing Obama’s newly-imposed sanctions on Russia, though Flynn earlier denied discussing them. Sally Yates, whom Trump would later fire as acting Attorney General for insubordination, is involved in the investigation. In the end, Flynn resigns over having misled Vice President Mike Pence (perhaps inadvertently) about the content of the conversation.

**9. February: Times claims extensive Russian contacts.** The New York Times [cites](#) “four current and former American officials” in reporting that the Trump campaign had “repeated contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials. The Trump campaign denies the claims — and the Times admits that there is “no evidence” of coordination between the campaign and the Russians. The White House and some congressional Republicans begin to raise questions about illegal intelligence leaks.

**10. March: the Washington Post targets Jeff Sessions.** The Washington Post [reports](#) that Attorney General Jeff Sessions had contact twice with the Russian ambassador during the campaign — once at a Heritage Foundation event and once at a meeting in Sessions’s Senate office. The Post suggests that the two meetings contradict Sessions’s testimony at his confirmation hearings that he had no contacts with the Russians, though in context (not presented by the Post) it was clear he meant in his capacity as a campaign surrogate, and that he was responding to claims in the “dossier” of ongoing contacts. The New York Times, in [covering](#) the story, adds that the Obama White House “rushed to preserve” intelligence related to alleged Russian links with the Trump campaign. By “preserve” it really means “disseminate”: officials spread evidence throughout other government agencies “to leave a clear trail of intelligence for government investigators” and perhaps the media as well.

*In summary: the Obama administration sought, and eventually obtained, authorization to eavesdrop on the Trump campaign; continued monitoring the Trump team even when no evidence of wrongdoing was found; then relaxed the NSA rules to allow evidence to be shared widely within the government,*

*virtually ensuring that the information, including the conversations of private citizens, would be leaked to the media.*

Confirmation that the Obama administration did indeed circulate claims about the Trump campaign's alleged contacts with Russia as widely as possible throughout the bureaucracy and to foreign governments was provided by [an article by The New York Times](#). The Moon of Alabama blog has [thoroughly discussed the implications of the revelations in this article](#). I would merely add to that discussion the following:

(1) The New York Times article provided further confirmation to my previous claim that there is [a British connection to this affair](#), with some of the warnings about supposed contacts between people associated with the Trump campaign and various Russians coming from British and Dutch intelligence (I should say that Dutch intelligence has a very long history of close collaboration with British intelligence extending back before the setting up of NATO); and

(2) that The New York Times article essentially admits that there is no evidence that many of the Russians these persons had contacts with were actually Russian intelligence officials as was previously claimed in [an earlier article](#). It turns out that the definition of who is a 'Russian intelligence official' is so flexible that it could be stretched to cover almost any Russian believed to be in good stead with the Russian government. The precise words used in The New York Times article are as follows

*The label "intelligence official" is not always cleanly applied in Russia, where ex-spies, oligarchs and government officials often report back to the intelligence services and elsewhere in the Kremlin. Steven L. Hall, the former head of Russia operations at the C.I.A., said that Mr. Putin was surrounded by a cast of characters, and that it was "fair to say that a good number of them come from an intelligence or security background. Once an intel guy, always an intel guy in Russia."*

That makes it look even more likely that most of these contacts were simply business contacts. Several people associated with Donald Trump eg. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, have long had perfectly legal and public business relationships with Russian businessmen, though contrary to some claims no evidence has ever come to light that Donald Trump ever did on any significant scale. Businessmen meet often to talk business and it is likely that most of the contacts which are being talked about were of this nature.

The New York Times article incidentally confirms that the FBI investigation into these contacts has so far revealed nothing inappropriate about them, and judging from some irritated comments by some Democrats it seems that FBI Director Comey reported as much to Congress yesterday.

The President's tweets on the revelation about the wiretaps follow

I would finish by saying that the information that the previous administration was tapping his phone whilst he was still a candidate was almost certainly provided to the President as [a first result of the leaks investigation](#) he has ordered.