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EDIBLE TRUMP

Something Fishy: Devin Nunes

What's going on with Devin Nunes?

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“He went to the White House, received some information with the help of the president’s own aides. And then came back to the White House the next day to brief the White House on what he had found out at the White House.” —Jonathan Karl on House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes (This Week with George Stephanopoulos, April 2, 2017)

We are two and a half months into the Trump administration, and the big ticket at the D.C. circus (besting the likes of Muslim bans, medieval health care plans, guns for the mentally ill, and Betsy DeVos) is “Russiagate,” the treason-tinged inquiry into Russia’s cyber attack on the 2016 election, and the Trump campaign’s potential collusion with said attack.

Devin Nunes, a Trump transition team member and Nathan Thurm impersonator, helmed the investigation until last Thursday, when he recused himself after attempting to provide cover for President Trump’s FBI-rejected claim that he was wiretapped.

Here’s a brief run down of what happened:

On March 4, 2017, President Trump tweeted that President Obama had wiretapped him.

On March 15, Trump told Tucker Carlson that new information related to his accusation would follow.

On March 20, FBI Director James Comey revealed that his agency was investigating possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. He refuted Trump’s claim that he’d been wiretapped.

On March 21, things went berserk. According to reports, Nunes received a call while travelling with a staffer, switched cars, and then headed to the White House to review classified documents without Adam Schiff, his Democratic counterpart. The following day, he told the press that he had a duty to inform the president of what he'd found (at the White House) the day before: the possible unmasking of names in legal intelligence gathering, unrelated to Russia.

On March 24, Nunes abruptly cancelled an open hearing with former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates. About Sally Yates: On January 26, 2017, Yates warned White House Counsel Don McGahn of National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn's pre-inauguration discussion of sanctions with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak. On February 13, Flynn was forced to resign for purportedly duping Vice President Mike Pence into vouching for him. In 2015, Mike Flynn was paid to appear at a Russian state TV event, and sat next to Vladimir Putin. In March 2017, Flynn retroactively registered as a lobbyist for Turkey.

Not to worry, it turns out pretty much everyone connected to the Trump campaign and transition has ties to Russia. Paul Manafort, Trump's campaign manager was a consultant for the pro-Russia Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich. Trump's former foreign policy advisor Carter Page has ties to Russian energy and unwittingly met with Russian spies in 2013 who referred to him as an "idiot." Roger Stone, Trump's long-time associate, has admitted to having a "back channel" to Wikileaks and communications with the Russian who hacked the DNC. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, met with Ambassador Kislyak and with the head of a sanctioned Russian bank during the transition.

I'm not done yet. Attorney General Jeff Sessions had to recuse himself from any Trump-Russia investigation because he lied during his Senate confirmation hearing about meeting with Ambassador Kislyak. Donald Trump, Jr., said in 2008, "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets. We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia." And who can forget that fun time in 2013 when Donald Trump wondered aloud to his Twitter followers if Vladimir Putin would become his "new best friend" at the Moscow Miss Universe Pageant?

People, if all of these connections were with Australia, this would still be super weird. So, let's remember that this is RUSSIA, the same Russia that

Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee for president, called “our number one geo-political foe.” Dick Cheney, who endorsed Trump for president, referred to the Russian cyber attack as “an act of war.”

So, in his committee’s probe into foreign aggression against our democracy, what were Devin Nunes and his Republican colleagues most worried about? The leaks, which are exposing possible wrongdoing by the Trump campaign.

On April 6, the House Ethics Committee announced that it was looking into allegations that Devin Nunes violated House rules and laws by making unauthorized disclosures of classified information. Nunes has stepped down from the Russia investigation, citing the ethics inquiry into his own behavior. He blames “entirely false and politically motivated” accusations from “leftwing activist groups.”

Taking Nunes’s place will be Mike Conaway, the guy with all of the football questions at the Comey hearing. In January, Conaway likened Russian interference in our elections to Mexican singers at a Hillary Clinton event. Because both are “foreign people influencing the vote.”

May the Senate investigation prevail.