

White House press briefing [via FNC's *America Reports*]

07/23/25

1:55:28 p.m.

34 seconds

KAROLINE LEAVITT: This is truly one of the greatest political scandals in American history and reporters at legacy outlets — some of which are sitting in this room today like The New York Times and The Washington Post — were ridiculously awarded Pulitzer Prizes for their perpetuation of this hoax. It's well past time for those awards to be stripped from the journalists who received them. It is not journalism to propagate political disinformation in service of the Democrat Party and those in the intelligence community who hand over out of context and fake intelligence to push a false political narrative.

(....)

1:56:48 p.m.

1 minute and 15 seconds

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE TULSI GABBARD: There is irrefutable evidence that detail how President Obama and his national security team directed the creation of an intelligence community assessment that they knew was false. They knew it would promote this contrived narrative that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to help President Trump win, selling it to the American people as though it were true. It wasn't. The report that we released today shows in great detail how they carried this out. They manufactured findings from shoddy sources. They suppressed evidence and credible intelligence that disproved their false claims. They disobeyed traditional tradecraft intelligence community standards and withheld the truth from the American people. In doing so, they conspired to subvert the will of the American people who elected Donald Trump in that election in November of 2016. They worked with their partners in the media to promote this lie, ultimately to undermine the legitimacy of President Trump and launching what would be a years-long coup against him and his administration. We're here today because the American people deserve the truth, they deserve accountability, and they deserve justice.

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1:58:42 p.m.

10 minutes and 26 seconds

GABBARD: I'm gonna go over the key findings from the House Intelligence report, which investigated the claims that were made by an intelligence community assessment ordered by President Obama and published in January of 2017. First, Putin's principal interests relating to the 2016 election were to undermine faith in the U.S. democratic process, not show any preference of a certain candidate. In fact, this report shows Putin held back leaking — held back from leaking compromising material on Hillary Clinton prior to the election, instead planning to release it after the election to weaken what Moscow viewed as an inevitable Clinton presidency.

In the January 2017 intelligence community assessment that President Obama ordered, John Brennan — who's CIA director at the time — and the intelligence community intentionally suppressed intelligence that showed Putin was saving the most damaging material that he had in his possession about Hillary Clinton until after her potential and likely victory. The report goes into great detail about the information that Russia and Putin had, which on Hillary Clinton, which included possible criminal acts, like secret meetings with multiple named U.S. religious organizations in which State Department officials offered an exchange for supporting Secretary Clinton's campaign for the presidency, significant increases in financing from the State Department. They also had documents that showed the patronage of the State Department to State Department employees who would go and support Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. There were high level DNC emails that detailed evidence of Hillary's "psycho-emotional problems, uncontrolled fits of anger, aggression, and cheerfulness," and that then Secretary Clinton was allegedly on a daily regimen of heavy tranquilizers. Then-CIA Director Brennan and the intelligence community mischaracterized intelligence and relied on dubious substandard sources to create a contrived false narrative that Putin developed a "clear preference" for Trump. Brennan and the IC misled lawmakers by referencing the debunked Steel Dossier to assess "Russia's plans and intentions," falsely suggesting that this dossier had intelligence value when he knew that it was discredited. The intelligence community excluded significant intelligence and ignored or selectively quoted reliable intelligence that contradicted the intelligence community assessment's key findings on Putin's alleged support for Trump . Including this intelligence reporting would have exposed the ICA's claim as implausible, if not ridiculous. The intelligence community assessment omitted reliably sourced information, such as how some Russian intelligence officials were "planning for candidate Hillary Clinton's victory," while others assessed neither Trump nor Clinton would respect Russia's interests . As was reflected in the ODNI documents that we released on Friday, multiple intelligence community assessments released in the months leading up to the November 2016 election, concluded that Russia had neither the intent nor capability to impact the outcome of the US election. On December 5 of 2016, the FBI and ODNI gave the House Intelligence Committee its first post-election classified briefing in which there was no mention of Putin aspiring to elect Trump by either agency. The Presidential Daily Brief drafted on December 8 of 2016, stated that no Russian or criminal actors impacted vote counts. This document was pulled just hours before it was to be published due to "new guidance." If it had been published, it would have been briefed to both President Obama and President-elect Donald Trump. On December 9, 2016, a National Security Council meeting was called to gather President Obama's senior national security officials, which included CIA Director Brennan. Then Obama DNI James Clapper, Susan Rice, and others. Following that secret meeting, DNI Clapper's assistant sent an email to the intelligence community with the subject line "POTUS tasking on Russia election meddling," tasking ODNI leaders to create a new assessment per the President's request. The House Intelligence Committee oversight report that we released today reveals that "unlike routine intelligence community analysis, the intelligence community assessment was a high profile product ordered by the President" — President Obama. It directed senior intelligence community agency heads and created an intelligence community assessment limited to just five analysts using one principal drafter. This is not something that occurs in the normal path of producing an intelligence community assessment that reflects the views across the intelligence community . The production of this intelligence community assessment was subject to unusual directives directly from the President

and senior political appointees, especially the former director of the CIA, John Brennan. The House Intelligence Committee oversight report also shows how, later that same day on December 9, Brennan ordered the publication of ‘substandard reporting’ on Russian activities which had previously been withheld from publication of prior assessments because the information was judged to have not met long standing publication standards. Some of the information later used in the Obama ordered assessment over the objections of veteran CIA officers was “unclear or from unknown sources.” The Intelligence Committee’s oversight report reveals that CIA Director Brennan overruled senior CIA officers who challenged the Obama ordered intelligence assessment stating, ‘we don’t have direct information that Putin wanted to get Trump elected.’ Yet the Obama directed assessment was published on January 6, 2017, which explicitly stated, “we assess Putin and the Russian government aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.” The CIA and FBI then led by John Brennan and James Comey expressed high confidence in this judgment while the NSA expressed moderate confidence. Yet, as the report we released today shows, the ICA, the Intelligence community assessment did not cite any report where Putin indicated helping Trump win was an objective. The opposite is true. With regards to the Steele Dossier, we now know that one of the source documents that the Obama administration used in the creation of this intelligence assessment in January of 2017 was none other than the discredited, unverified Steele Dossier. The House Intel report states: “Contradicting public claims by then-CIA Director Brennan that the dossier was not in any way incorporated into this intelligence assessment.” The dossier was referenced in the intelligence assessment’s main body texts and further detailed in a two-page assessment annex. John Brennan lied and President Obama ordered because he knew it was discredited. It was a politically motivated, manufactured document. He directed senior CIA officials to use it anyway. CIA officer told the House Intelligence Committee staff as they investigated this “the director of the CIA, John Brennan, refused to remove it, and when confronted with the dossier’s many flaws responded, ‘yes, but doesn’t it ring true?’” Even the bipartisan Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report published in 2020 criticized the FBI’s handling of the Steele Dossier, noting it’s completely unverified nature and purposeful sidestepping of intelligence community procedures in its use. Now, President Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Brennan, James Clapper, James Comey, and others, including their mouthpieces in the media knowingly lied as they repeated the contrived narrative that was created in this January 2017 intelligence community assessment with high confidence as though it were fact. John Brennan as CIA director, stated in a memo to his agency staff in December of 2016, saying, “there is strong consensus among us on the scope, nature, and intent of Russian interference in our presidential elected — election.” This was reported by NBC News confirming that Brennan, along with James Clapper and James Comey agreed with the CIA’s assessment that Russia intervened to help Trump win the presidency. As Obama’s Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper was tasked with overseeing the creation of this assessment in January of 20 — 2017 by President Obama, and he expressed confidence in its findings. In a 2018 interview with the Harvard Gazette, he talked about how he provided Trump with the same classified assessment that President Obama received, which included the high-confidence judgment that Putin directly ordered the hacking and election interference. Clapper then went on to add, “I think they” — the Russians — “actually influenced the outcome.” This is a brief summary of the details that you’ll find within the House majority staff’s report in their investigation into the Obama-directed January 2017

intelligence community assessment that leads us to the very same conclusion that we announced in the release of our documents on Friday. The implications of this are far reaching and have to do with the integrity of our democratic republic. It has to do with an outgoing President taking action to manufacture intelligence to undermine and usurp the will of the American people in that election and launch what would be a years-long coup against the incoming President of the United States, Donald Trump.

(...)

2:10:54 p.m.

1 minute and 34 seconds

ED O'KEEFE: The Senate Intelligence Committee spent several years looking into this and unanimously agreed in a bipartisan fashion — Secretary of State Rubio was a member of that committee — that there was no political interference. There was a years-long Justice Department investigation into this as well that also concluded no political interference. So, help us from a 50,000-foot level explain, what do you now have that refutes those two conclusions?

GABBARD: I will encourage you — my role as the director of national intelligence, my job began as I said when I came into this role was to make sure that we are telling the truth to the American people, and that we are ensuring that the intelligence community is not being politicized. So, I'm not asking you to take my word for it. I'm asking you and the media to conduct honest journalism, and the American people to see for yourself in the documents we have released now, close to 200 pages, that point in multiple references, multiple examples, to include comments that have been made by senior intelligence professionals, who are some still working within these agencies today, that confirm the conclusions we have drawn that President Obama directed a intelligence community assessment to be created to further this contrived, false narrative that ultimately led to a year's long coup to try to undermine President Trump's presidency.

O'KEEFE: Is a belief that the other investigations missed that or covered it up?

GABBARD: I'm telling you to look at the evidence — look at the evidence — and it will tell you the truth.

(...)

2:14:36 p.m.

8 minutes and 47 seconds

REAGAN REESE: You laid out that the documents reveal that the Obama administration did not publish the December 2016 presidential briefing that demonstrated Russia did not steal the election. Trump was receiving his briefings at the time because he was President-Elect. Are you of the view that that information is kept out of the briefing as then President-Elect Donald Trump would have seen it?

GABBARD: I don't have any documents that speak to exactly what the new guidance was that was given as a reason for pulling that documents, which by the way, still has never been published until we released it last week Friday. One could assume that they didn't want President Trump to see a document that came from the intelligence community that would contradict the Russia hoax narrative that began through the Hillary Clinton campaign with the Steele Dossier.

REESE: One more. Maybe for your or Karoline: The President said yesterday that Obama committed treason. Do you or the White House believe that the Supreme Court's immunity decision protects Obama from prosecution?

LEAVITT: I can speak to the President's feelings on this matter. He spoke to you yesterday in the Oval office, but I also spoke to him about this morning. And he wants to see all of those who perpetuated this fraud against our country, who betrayed our country, and the Constitution, to be thoroughly investigated and held accountable. And it's been, you know, ten years of this. I would just add, based on everything the director has said and declassified, all of you in this room should go through and look at this report and review the intelligence. Because, unfortunately, that has not happens. Many of the people who perpetuated this hoax — Clapper, by Andy McCabe, James Comey and others — have been hired by major networks in this room to go on television and continue to spew these lies, knowing that they are lies. And, if you all recall, just flash back to 2016 and the years after, the entire Trump one presidency was embroiled in this scandal that was perpetuated by the Democratic Party. And you had major Democratic Party officials in this city — mainly Adam Schiff, Hillary Clinton, Elizabeth Warren — who went on television and told the American people Donald Trump is an asset of Russia. It was a lie. They always knew. Hillary Clinton herself said that President Trump would be a puppet for pollutant. Senator Tim Kaine at the time called President Trump Vladimir Putin's defense lawyers. Adam Schiff stated in one of the worst things that a lawmaker can do is tell the American people I know something you don't know, it's classified and I can't tell you. And that's what he said. I can tell you the case is more than that. I can't go into the particulars, but there is more than circumstantial evidence now. Not enough people in this room, enough journalists in this country pushed Adam Schiff to say what are you talking about and what evidence do you have. Everybody just ran with the lies. It led to impeachments. It led to the division of our country. So many Americans, from listening to outlets in this room, believed in these lies and it's a complete scam and it's a scandal and the President wants to see accountability for that. [TO WEGMANN] Phil.

PHILIP WEGMANN: Thank you. A question for Director Gabbard. A spokesperson for former President Obama said in a statement earlier this week: "Nothing in the documents issued last week undercuts the widely accepted conclusion that Russia worked to influence the 2016 election, but did not successfully manipulate any votes." How do you respond to critics like former President Obama and also others on the Hill who say that the administration is conflating apples and oranges here, conflating allegations of actual hacking of voter machines and allegations of interference generally?

GABBARD: I think it's a disservice to the American people that former President Obama's office and others who are criticizing the transparency that is being delivered by releasing these documents, they are doing a disservice to the American people and trying to deflect away from

their culpability in what is a historic scandal and — and negative action towards the American people and our democratic republic. The answer to that statement can very clearly be found throughout all of the documents that we have released, again, showing that Russia has took action to try to sow discord in the election, but showed no preference for or against any singular candidate.

WEGMANN: You've long been an opponent of weaponization in government. How do you respond to criticism that referring Obama administration officials, and even potentially the former President, is just more weaponization, and this is a potential race to the bottom?

GABBARD: I think that's a very disrespectful attack on the American people who deserve the truth. They deserve to have faith and trust in the integrity of our democratic republic, which is under bent — which has been undermined by President Obama through his direction of this manufactured, fake intelligence document, knowing that it was filled with lies and knowing that it would and could then be used for all of the actions that came after.

LEAVITT: And I would just add, there needs to be accountability for that weaponization, Phil, that we've seen. And no one has been a victim of the weaponized government more than President Trump, not just because of this political scandal. You all recall his house was raided. So, I think, you know, it's very disingenuous for people to say, how dare they speak of former President Obama about this based on evidence and based on intelligence when the former President of the United States, Donald Trump's home, was raided, when he was forced to sit in a Manhattan courtroom and many other courtrooms across the country for crimes he never committed when he was — when he was impeached and indicted and the entire country witnessed that, that's the weaponization of justice. Now, the President is back because the American people see the truth. Nearly 80 million Americans reelected him back to this office. And he believes that we need to have justice and accountability. And I think the nearly 80 million Americans who reelected him agree with that. [TO COLLINS] Kaitlan.

KAITLAN COLLINS: Thank you. Karoline. Two questions for Director Gabbard, just on this. Director Gabbard, you referenced the past intelligence reports and assessments on this, including that 2017 one that was signed off, as Ed noted, by every Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, including the acting chair of the time, now Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said in a statement that they did not find any evidence of Russian collusion, but what they did find, however, is very troubling and they found irrefutable evidence of Russian meddling. Onem are you saying that he's wrong in that statement that he made then? And secondly, what would you say to people who believe that you're only releasing these documents now to improve your standing with the President after he said that your intelligence assessments were wrong?

GABBARD: Well, first, I want to correct something that you stated, which was citing the Senate Intelligence Committee's report as being one and the same. I think you said the intelligence community. The Senate Intelligence Committee has a very different function than the office of the Director of National Intelligence. The evidence and the intelligence that has been declassified and released is irrefutable. I'm going to let Karoline speak to Secretary Rubio.

LEAVITT: I'll speak to both questions. First, on Secretary Rubio, he put out a statement in 2020 following that Senate Intelligence Committee report, and he said what they found is troubling. "We found irrefutable evidence of Russian meddling," which the director of National Intelligence just confirmed for all of you that Russia was trying to sow distrust and chaos. But what's the outrage in this that Secretary Rubio did not say at the time — the Democrats were saying at the time, is the fact that the intelligence community was concocting this narrative that the President colluded with the Russians, that the President's son was holding secret meetings with the Russians, all of these lies that were never true and he also said at that time "we discovered deeply troubling actions taken by the FBI" under Comey, "particularly their acceptance and willingness to rely on the Steele Dossier without verifying its methodology or sourcing." The Steele dossier, that many outlets in this room ran as the gospel truth, and it was cooked up and paid for by the Clinton campaign. As for your second question, Kaitlin, I think who is saying that that she would release this to try to boost her standing with the President? Who has said that?

COLLINS: Well, the President has publicly undermined her when it came to Iran. He said she was wrong. He told me that she didn't know what she was talking about. That was on Air Force One, on camera.

LEAVITT: No, the only people who are suggesting that the director of national intelligence would release evidence to try to boost her standing with the President are the people in this room who constantly try to sow distrust and chaos amongst the President's cabinet —

COLLINS: [Inaudible] by the Attorney General Bill Barr at the time.

LEAVITT: — and it is not working. I — I am -- I will — I will just answer your question directly. I am with the president of the United States every day. He has the utmost confidence in Director Gabbard. He always has. He continues to. And that is true of his entire cabinet, who is all working as one team to deliver on the promises this President made.