

U.S. Sen. Johnson, Grassley: Seek State Department documents connected to October 2016 meeting with Christopher Steele and the timing of FBI's awareness of Steele's political motivations before submitting FISA applications

Posted on Friday, May 10, 2019

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Contact:

Austin Altenburg

Taylor Foy

WASHINGTON - In letters sent yesterday to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) and Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) are highlighting concerns regarding [the FBI's possible awareness of political motivations behind the Steele dossier ahead of FISA applications that were used to surveil members of the Trump campaign, during the 2016 election](#) . The senators are requesting notes, memos, and other information related to an October 2016 meeting between Christopher Steele and State Department-information that was reportedly referred to the FBI, possibly before the FISA applications.

"We write today seeking information about Christopher Steele's interactions with State Department employees before the 2016 presidential election. We understand

that State Department employees received unverified memoranda Steele authored about candidate Trump and Russia (commonly referred to as the Steele dossier) in the summer of 2016, met with Steele and one of his colleagues in October 2016, documented that October meeting and topics discussed therein, and referred the information to the FBI. We seek all material related to those incidents along with an explanation of when the State Department provided it to the FBI,” the senators wrote.

“Based on the publicly-released version of the typed notes of the meeting, it appears Steele’s intent of the meeting with the State Department was to maximize the impact of the unverified information that he had acquired in an effort to undermine the Trump campaign. Further, if that information was included in the material submitted to the FBI, then the FBI may have been aware of Steele’s political motivations before submitting any FISA application.”

The Chairmen recently raised questions about any FBI awareness of [leaks to the media](#) and possible efforts to use briefings with the Trump transition team as [covert intelligence gathering operations](#).

Chairmen Johnson and Grassley’s letters to FBI Director Christopher Wray and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are attached and below:

May 9, 2019
The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Wray:

We write today seeking information about Christopher Steele’s interactions with State Department employees before the 2016 presidential election. We understand that State Department employees received unverified memoranda Steele authored about candidate Trump and Russia (commonly referred to as the Steele dossier) in the summer of 2016, met with Steele and one of his colleagues in October 2016, documented that October meeting and topics discussed therein, and referred the information to the FBI.[1] We seek all material related to those incidents along with an explanation of when the State Department provided it to the FBI.

Late last month, material relating to the meeting between the State Department and Steele was released pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. Portions of that material were deemed “classified” by the FBI; however, these materials were reportedly originally unclassified.[2] The unclassified portion of the typed notes from the October 2016 meeting, authored by Deputy Assistant Secretary Kathleen Kavalec, stated that “Orbis undertook the investigation into the Russia/Trump connection at the behest of an institution he [Steele] declined to identify that had been hacked.”[3] As the reporting notes, the Democratic National Committee had been hacked that year. Additionally, the unclassified notes described the intent of that institution as “[] keen to see this information [Steele dossier] come to light prior to November 8.”[4] Further, at the meeting Steele indicated that he might have been in communication with multiple media outlets.[5] If true, that would contradict the Carter Page FISA application where the FBI repeatedly represented to the court that Steele did not have unauthorized contacts with the press prior to October 2016.[6]

Based on the publicly-released version of the typed notes of the meeting, it appears Steele’s intent of the meeting with the State Department was to maximize the impact of the unverified information that he had acquired in an effort to undermine the Trump campaign. Further, if that information was included in the material submitted to the FBI, then the FBI may have been aware of Steele’s political motivations before submitting any FISA application.

Accordingly, in order to better understand exactly when and what information was provided to the FBI, please provide the following information no later than May 24, 2019:

1. On what date did the State Department notify the FBI that it obtained the Steele dossier?
2. How did the State Department describe to the FBI the process by which it obtained the Steele dossier?
3. On what date did the State Department notify the FBI about the October 2016 meeting between Kathleen Kavalec and Christopher Steele?
4. On what date did the State Department provide the memorandum, notes, and any other material connected to Kathleen Kavalec’s October 2016 meeting with Christopher Steele to the FBI?

5. Did any FBI employees request that Christopher Steele furnish the dossier to the State Department or seek a meeting with the State Department? If so, who, when, and why?
6. Did the State Department mark any material from the October 2016 meeting as classified? If so, what was initially marked classified and at what level?
7. Has the FBI provided all material relating to the State Department's meeting with Steele to the Justice Department Office of the Inspector General? If so, on what date? If not, why not?
8. All records, including all memoranda, notes, and other material regarding the State Department's receipt of the Steele dossier and its referral of that information to the FBI.
9. An explanation about the legal and factual basis for classifying any of these materials.

We anticipate that your written reply and most responsive documents will be unclassified. Please send all unclassified material directly to each Committee. In keeping with the requirements of Executive Order 13526, if any of the responsive documents do contain classified information, please segregate all unclassified material within the classified documents, provide all unclassified information directly to each Committee, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. Although our Committees comply with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information, they are not bound, absent prior agreement, by any handling restrictions.

Should you have any questions, please contact Brian Downey of Chairman Johnson's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee staff at (202) 224-4751 or Joshua Flynn-Brown of Chairman Grassley's Finance Committee staff at (202) 224-4515.

Sincerely,
Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Charles E. Grassley

Chairman
Committee on Finance

cc: The Honorable Michael Horowitz
Inspector General

May 9, 2019
The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write today seeking information about Christopher Steele's interactions with State Department employees before the 2016 presidential election. We understand that State Department employees received unverified memoranda Steele authored about candidate Trump and Russia (commonly referred to as the Steele dossier) in the summer of 2016, met with Steele and one of his colleagues in October 2016, documented that October meeting and topics discussed therein, and referred the information to the FBI.[7] We seek all material related to those incidents along with an explanation of when the State Department provided it to the FBI.

Late last month, material relating to the meeting between the State Department and Steele was released pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit. Portions of that material were deemed "classified" by the FBI; however, these materials were reportedly originally unclassified.[8] The unclassified portion of the typed notes from the October 2016 meeting, authored by Deputy Assistant Secretary Kathleen Kavalec, stated that "Orbis undertook the investigation into the Russia/Trump connection at the behest of an institution he [Steele] declined to identify that had been hacked." [9] As the reporting notes, the Democratic National Committee had been hacked that year. Additionally, the unclassified notes described the intent of that institution as "[] keen to see this information [Steele dossier] come to light prior to November 8." [10] Further, at the meeting Steele indicated that he might have been in communication with multiple media outlets.[11] If true, that would contradict the Carter Page FISA application where the FBI repeatedly represented to the court that Steele did not have unauthorized contacts with the press prior to October 2016.[12]

Based on the publicly-released version of the typed notes of the meeting, it appears Steele's intent of the meeting with the State Department was to maximize the impact of the unverified information that he had acquired in an effort to undermine the Trump campaign. Further, if that information was included in the material submitted to the FBI, then the FBI may have been aware of Steele's political motivations before submitting any FISA application.

Accordingly, in order to better understand exactly when and what information was provided to the FBI, please provide the following information no later than May 24, 2019:

1. On what date did the State Department notify the FBI that it obtained the Steele dossier?
2. How did the State Department describe to the FBI the process by which it obtained the Steele dossier?
3. On what date did the State Department notify the FBI about the October 2016 meeting between Kathleen Kavalec and Christopher Steele?
4. On what date did the State Department provide the memorandum, notes, and any other material connected to Kathleen Kavalec's October 2016 meeting with Christopher Steele to the FBI?
5. Did any State Department employees request that Christopher Steele furnish the dossier to the State Department or seek a meeting with the State Department? If so, who, when, and why?
6. Did the State Department mark any material from the October 2016 meeting as classified? If so, what was initially marked classified and at what level?
7. Did the meeting between the State Department and Steele take place in a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility? If so, at what clearance level? If not, where did it take place?
8. Has the State Department provided all material relating to the State Department's meeting with Steele to the Justice Department Office of the Inspector General? If so, on what date? If not, why not?
9. All records, including all memoranda, notes, and other material regarding the

State Department's receipt of the Steele dossier and its referral of that information to the FBI.

10. An explanation about the legal and factual basis for classifying any of these materials.

We anticipate that your written reply and most responsive documents will be unclassified. Please send all unclassified material directly to each Committee. In keeping with the requirements of Executive Order 13526, if any of the responsive documents do contain classified information, please segregate all unclassified material within the classified documents, provide all unclassified information directly to each Committee, and provide a classified addendum to the Office of Senate Security. Although our Committees comply with all laws and regulations governing the handling of classified information, they are not bound, absent prior agreement, by any handling restrictions.

Should you have any questions, please contact Brian Downey of Chairman Johnson's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee staff at (202) 224-4751 or Joshua Flynn-Brown of Chairman Grassley's Finance Committee staff at (202) 224-4515.

Sincerely,
Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance