

Two Cheers for Trump's Declassification Order

On September 17, *Politico* reports, US president Donald Trump partially declassified a government surveillance application targeting former campaign consultant Carter Page and directed the US Department of Justice to publicly release text messages relating to the “Russiagate” probe between former FBI Director James Comey and other DoJ/FBI personnel.

Whether or not this is a SMART on Trump's part remains to be seen, but in my opinion it's the RIGHT move. I'm giving it two cheers, not three, only because I'd like to see more stuff declassified and publicly released.

Americans stand divided on the question of whether or not the Russian state “meddled” in the 2016 US presidential election. We're also divided on the question of whether or not Trump and/or key associates of Trump, “colluded” in such meddling.

So far, the actual publicly produced evidence makes a very limited case for the “meddling” charge (a Russian troll farm apparently ran some cheesy Facebook ads, etc. and the whole operation doesn't seem to have cost a drop in the bucket compared to e.g. Sheldon Adelson's \$125 million “meddling” on behalf of Israel), and no case at all for the “collusion” allegations that wouldn't apply equally to Trump's opponents (who paid a British former spy to work Russian sources for “dirt” on Trump).

At this point, “Russiagate” continues to look like a ham-handed attempt to explain away Hillary Clinton's poorly run — and losing — 2016 presidential campaign, because nothing that happens to Hillary Clinton can ever be even a little bit Hillary Clinton's fault.

Special Counsel Robert Mueller has had 16 months to get the goods on “Russian meddling” and “collusion.” So far he's publicly produced bubkes beyond indicting some Russians who will never face trial (or, conveniently for Mueller, testify) and some charges (including a few with plea bargains or convictions) against Trump associates on pretty much everything under the sun except his actual brief.

The closest he's come is with former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, who's admitted to lying to the FBI about post-election, not pre-election, contacts with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak — contacts concerning the United Nations and (there's that other country again) Israel.

Classification of information by the US government is structured per Executive Order 13526, which mandates that:

“In no case shall information be classified, continue to be maintained as classified, or fail to be declassified in order to ... conceal violations of law, inefficiency, or administrative error

... prevent embarrassment to a person, organization, or agency ... [or] prevent or delay the release of information that does not require protection in the interest of the national security.”

The allegations are already out there. The only plausible reasons for keeping the evidence for (or against) them classified are the reasons expressly prohibited in that executive order.

President Trump, get ALL the information out in public. Let the American people see the sausage, and how it was made, for ourselves instead of putting us through more reruns of commercials about how great Democrats will think the sausage tastes and how Republicans will all get salmonella from it.