

Russia-probe memo released to reveal bias

Trump, critics argue whether declassified document proves FBI mishandled investigation

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Claiming vindication and straining to derail the Russia probe, President Donald Trump declassified a top secret congressional memo Friday, and suggested it proved the investigation of his presidential campaign was fatally flawed. Democrats said the document did nothing to clear him or his campaign, and the FBI called the memo inaccurate and incomplete.

Butting heads just as they had before the memo's release, Trump and his critics stuck to the positions they had staked out in the weeks leading up to the hotly disputed release of the memo prepared by Republicans on the House intelligence committee. The memo makes their case — and Trump's — that abuses in the early stages of the FBI's investigation made it worse than worthless. The Democrats, having none of it, said the four-page memo merely cherry-picks Republican talking points in an effort to smear law enforcement and undercut the current federal investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller. Rep. Adam Schiff, the committee's top Democrat, said the GOP document "mischaracterizes highly sensitive classified information" and its release "will do long-term damage to the intelligence community and our law enforcement agencies."

The memo's central premise is that the FBI relied excessively on anti-Trump research funded by Democrats in seeking a warrant to monitor the communications of a Trump campaign associate and that federal authorities concealed the full details of who was paying for the information.

The disclosure of the document is extraordinary since it involves details about surveillance of Americans, national security information the government regards as among its most highly classified. Its release is likely to further escalate an intra-government conflict that has divide the White House and his hand-picked law enforcement leaders.

Trump, who lashed out at the FBI and Justice Department Friday morning, refused to express confidence in



Attorney General Jeff Sessions speaks with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on Friday during the opening of the summit on Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking at Department of Justice in Washington.



President Donald Trump listens Friday during a meeting with North Korean defectors where he talked with reporters about allowing the release of a secret memo on the FBI's role in the Russia inquiry, in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller and is mentioned by name in the memo.

Asked if he was more likely to fire Rosenstein, and if he still had confidence in him, Trump retorted. "You figure that one out."

A senior White House official said later the administration expects Rosenstein to remain in his job.

Trump has been telling confidants he believed the memo would validate his concerns that the FBI and Justice Department conspired against him. Though the document had been classified since it deals with warrants obtained from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the White House declassified it Friday and sent it to the intelligence committee chairman, Republican Rep. Devin Nunes, for immediate release.

The development also comes amid an ongoing effort

by Trump and congressional Republicans to discredit the investigation by Mueller that focuses not only on whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia but also on whether the president sought to obstruct justice. Republicans seized on the memo's allegations to argue that the FBI's investigation was politically tainted from the start.

But the memo does nothing to address obstruction questions that have led Mueller to express interest in interviewing Trump. It also reveals the FBI investigation actually began in July 2016, months before the warrant was even sought, based on information involving a separate Trump aide, George Papadopoulos, who has already pleaded guilty to federal charges.

Mueller inherited the probe in May of 2017. Four people have so far been charged in his investigation.

bullets had tool marks consistent with the equipment in Haig's backyard workshop, according to the complaint.

It also alleges that FBI agents searching Haig's home on Oct. 19 found armor-piercing ammunition.

Haig, a 55-year-old aerospace engineer who sold ammunition as a hobby for about 25 years, said he met Paddock at a Phoenix gun show in the weeks before the shooting and that he was well-dressed and polite.

He didn't have a quantity of tracer ammunition on hand that Paddock was seeking, so Paddock contacted him several days later and lined up a sale at Haig's home. Tracer bullets contain a pyrotechnic charge that illuminates the path of fired bullets so shooters can see whether their aim is correct.

Haig said he was shocked and sickened when a federal agent informed him of the massacre 11 hours after it unfolded.

Haig's lawyer said they held the news conference in a bid to protect his reputation after he was revealed earlier this week to be a "person of interest" in the investigation. Haig's identity emerged by mistake after his name was not redacted in court documents.

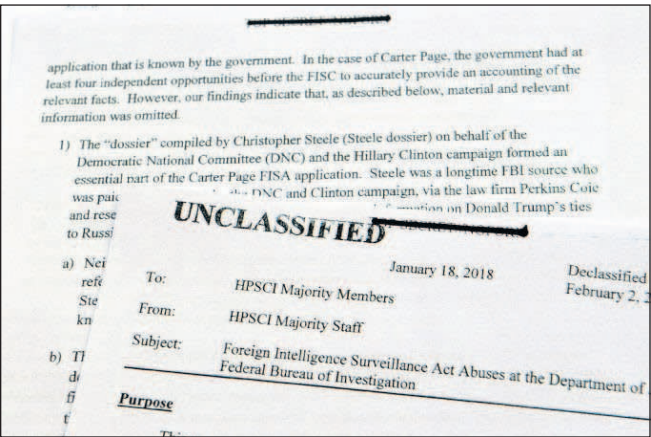
government confirmation that the FBI in October 2016 obtained a secret surveillance warrant on a Trump campaign associate, Carter Page, on the basis that agents believed he might be an agent of a foreign power —Russia. That warrant was signed off on multiple times, including by Rosenstein.

In a statement, Page, who served as a foreign policy adviser and came on the FBI radar in 2013 as part of a separate counterintelligence probe, said, "The brave and assiduous oversight by Congressional leaders in discovering this unprecedented abuse of process represents a giant, historic leap in the repair of America's democracy."

The memo asserts that opposition research conducted by a former British spy, Christopher Steele, "formed an essential part" of the initial application to receive the warrant. It's unclear how much or what information Steele collected was included in the application, or how much has been corroborated. Steele's research into Trump and Russia was compiled into a series of memos, or dossier, containing salacious allegations.

Regardless, the FBI routinely relies on multiple sources of information when it obtains surveillance warrants. And the memo makes clear that the FBI believed there was probable cause that Page was acting as an agent of a foreign power and a judge agreed — four times over.

Steele's opposition research effort was initially funded by the conservative Washington Free Beacon. It was later picked up by the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign and the Democratic National Committee through a Washington law firm. The memo says the FBI cut ties with Steele, a longtime FBI source, for an improper disclosure to the media over his relationship with the bureau.



After President Donald Trump declassified the intelligence memo, the Republican-led House Intelligence Committee released the memo based on classified information that alleges the FBI abused U.S. government surveillance powers.

Trump said Friday of the information in the memo: "I think it's a disgrace. What's going on in this country, I think it's a disgrace."

Earlier in the day, he tweeted, "The top Leadership and Investigators of the FBI and the Justice Department

have politicized the sacred investigative process in favor of Democrats and against Republicans — something which would have been unthinkable just a short time ago. Rank & File are great people."

The memo offered the first

Arizona man who sold ammo to Las Vegas shooter is charged

CHANDLER, Ariz. (AP) — An Arizona man who sold ammunition to the gunman who carried out the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history was charged Friday with manufacturing armor-piercing bullets, according to court documents.

Unfired armor-piercing bullets found inside the Las Vegas hotel room where Stephen Paddock launched the attack on Oct. 1 contained the fingerprints of ammunition dealer Douglas Haig, according to a criminal complaint filed in federal court in Phoenix. It says Haig didn't have a license to manufacture armor-piercing ammunition.

The documents don't say if the ammunition was used in the attack. Haig was charged 35 minutes before holding a news conference where he said he didn't notice anything suspicious when he sold 720 rounds of ammunition to Paddock in the weeks before the massacre that left 58 people dead.

Haig told investigators that when Paddock bought the ammunition at his home in suburban Phoenix, Paddock went to his car to get gloves and put them on before taking the box from Haig, the complaint said. "I had no contribution to



Douglas Haig takes questions from reporters at a news conference Friday in Chandler, Ariz.

what Paddock did," Haig told reporters earlier Friday, adding that there was nothing unusual about the type or quantity of ammunition the shooter bought. "I had no way to see into his mind."

A phone message left Friday afternoon for Haig's attorney, Marc Victor, wasn't immediately returned.

The two armor-piercing bullets found inside Paddock's hotel room with Haig's fingerprints had an "incendiary capsule" on their noses, the documents said. A forensic analysis of those two

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