

# Obama-era Illegal Surveillance Timeline Against Whistle-Blowers

by [Sharyl Attkisson](#)

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You can find many [timelines](#) that follow allegations of Russia tampering in the U.S. election and alleged [involvement](#) of Trump officials. But I couldn't find any comprehensive timelines cross-referencing Obama-era surveillance of whistleblowers, journalists and other U.S. citizens with Russia surveillance allegations. So I built one. Please note: temporal proximity of events doesn't necessarily imply a connection.

[\*Related: Collusion Against Trump timeline\*](#)

## **January 21, 2009:**

President Obama takes office; pledges unprecedented transparency.



### **April 2009:**

Someone leaks the unmasked name of Congresswoman Jane Harman to the press. According to news reports, the Bush administration **NSA incidentally recorded** and saved Harman's phone [conversations](#) with pro-Israel lobbyists who were under investigation for espionage. The story is first broken by Congressional Quarterly's Jeff Stein.

### **December 17, 2009:**

The Obama administration prosecutes FBI contractor Shamai Leibowitz for leaking documents to the media in April 2009. Leibowitz says he leaked because he felt FBI practices were “an abuse of power and a violation of the law” which he reported to his superiors at the FBI “who did nothing about them.”

(According to the ACLU: “Amazingly, the sentencing judge said, ‘I don’t know what was divulged other than some documents, and how it compromised things, I have no idea.’”)

[Click here to read “Timeline of alleged sabotage of Trump in 2016 by Democrats and Ukraine.”](#)

## **2010:**

The IRS secretly begins “targeting” conservative groups that are seeking nonprofit tax-exempt status, by singling out ones that have “Tea Party” or “Patriot” in their names.

Army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning begins illegally leaks classified information to WikiLeaks [revealing](#), among other matters, that the U.S. is extensively spying on the United Nations.

Obama Attorney General Eric Holder renews a Bush-era subpoena of New York Times reporter James Risen in a leak investigation.

Obama administration pursues espionage charges against NSA whistleblower Thomas Drake. (According to the [ACLU](#): spy charges were later dropped and Drake pled guilty to a misdemeanor. The judge called the government’s conduct in the case “unconscionable.”)

**May 28, 2010:**

The government secretly applies for a [warrant](#) to obtain Google email information of Fox News reporter James Rosen in a leak investigation, without telling Rosen.

James Rosen of Fox News

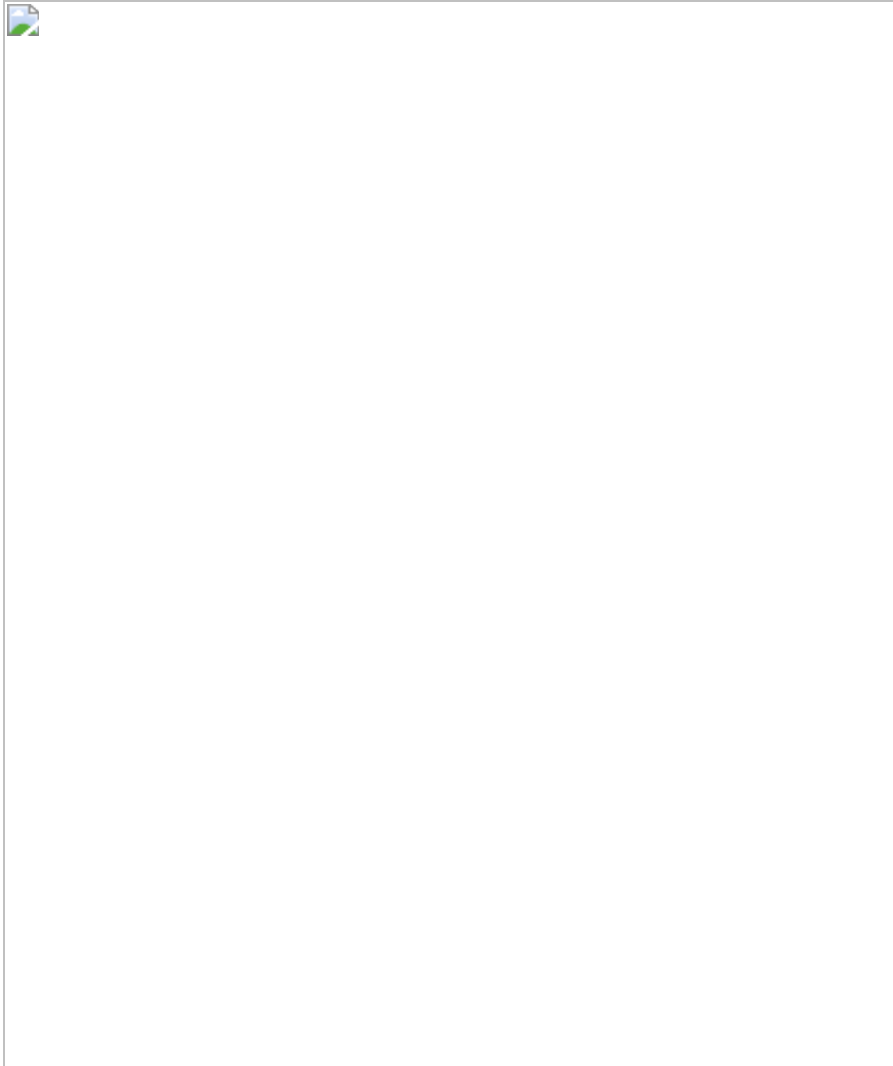
**September 21, 2010:**

Internal [email](#) entitled “Obama Leak Investigations” at “global intelligence” company Stratfor claims Obama’s then-Homeland Security adviser John Brennan is targeting journalists.

“Brennan is behind the witch hunts of investigative journalists learning information from inside the beltway sources,” writes one Stratfor official to another.

The email continues: “Note — There is specific tasker from the [White House] to go after anyone printing materials negative to the Obama agenda (oh my.) **Even the FBI is shocked.** The Wonder Boys must be in meltdown mode...”

“The Wonder Boys” reportedly refers to the National Security Agency (NSA). Brennan later becomes President Obama’s CIA Director.



John Brennan, former CIA Director and Homeland Security Adviser

**Early February 2011:**

After receiving an anonymous tip, CBS News investigative correspondent Sharyl Attkisson begins researching the Department of Justice “gunwalking” operation nicknamed “Fast

and Furious” that secretly let thousands of weapons be trafficked to Mexican drug cartels. One of the “walked” guns had been used by illegal aliens who murdered U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry in December 2010.



U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry

**February 22, 2011:**

CBS' Attkisson breaks [news](#) about "Fast and Furious" on *The CBS Evening News*.

After the story airs, the government issues an internal [memo](#) that seeks to "push positive stories" to contradict the news.

[quote]Given the negative coverage by CBS Evening News last week...ATF needs to proactively push positive stories this week, in an effort **to preempt some negative reporting**, or at minimum, lessen the coverage of such stories in the news cycle by replacing them with good stories about ATF.[/quote]

**March 4, 2011:**

CBS News' Attkisson [exclusively](#) interviews sitting ATF special agent John Dodson. He gives a firsthand account contradicting government denials re: Fast and Furious.

ATF Special Agent John Dodson

**May 2011:**

White House recruits democratic operative Eric Schultz to spin on Fast and Furious and to counter the House Oversight Committee's investigative work on the case. (Schultz previously served as intern to Sen. Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton.)





Former Obama operative Eric Schultz

**Spring 2011:**

Obama intel officials capture and record **incidental private communications** between Congressman Dennis Kucinich, a Democrat, and a Libyan official. The recordings are later leaked to the press.

**2011:**

Fox News reporter Mike Levine is subpoenaed by the Department of Justice regarding a story he reported about a federal grand jury's indictments of terrorism suspects. The subpoena is later dropped.

### **June 2, 2011:**

Republican Mitt Romney announces he'll challenge President Obama in campaign 2012.

### **June 28, 2011:**

Obama U.S. Attorney for Arizona **Dennis Burke secretly leaks sensitive government information** to Fox News, allegedly to retaliate against ATF whistleblower John Dodson in the Fast and Furious case. (Burke is former chief of staff to former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano.)

### **August 2011:**

U.S. Attorney Burke resigns while under investigation for the [improper leak](#) of sensitive information about Dodson. The Inspector General later confirms the leak and Burke apologizes.

### **September 2011:**

White House operative Schultz invites Attkisson and several other national journalists to off the record backgrounder about Fast and Furious documents subpoenaed by Congress. Later, on the phone, Shultz screams and cusses at Attkisson as she asks questions raised by the Fast and Furious documents.

### **October 3, 2011:**

Obama administration [secretly](#) changes longstanding policy. The change creates a “loophole” that Sen. Ron Wyden would later say **allows the NSA to conduct “backdoor searches” of “incidental collection” of U.S. citizens’** domestic communications.

The same day, CBS News airs Attkisson’s report on newly-uncovered [memos](#) that contradict Attorney General Eric Holder’s denials about Fast and Furious.



Former Attorney General Eric Holder

### **October 4, 2011:**

In an internal email, Attorney General Eric Holder's top press aide Tracy Schmalzer [emails](#) White House operative Schultz **calling Attkisson "out of control."** Schultz replies, "Her piece was really bad for the AG."

### **November 2011:**

CIA Director Gen. David Petraeus, who's married, allegedly begins an affair with his biographer, Paula Broadwell. (The FBI would later say it "stumbled" upon evidence of the affair incidentally during an unspecified, much broader investigation.)

### **December 2011:**

Amid much criticism, Justice Department finally, officially [retracts](#) the false letter it had submitted to Congress in February. The letter had stated that the Fast and Furious allegations of gunwalking were untrue.

### **February 13, 2012:**

At approximately 10:30pm, remote intruders secretly download **new spy software proprietary to a federal agency** onto Attkisson's CBS work computer. (The software was secretly attached to a legitimate Hotmail email and downloaded in the background after a pop-up ad appeared).

### **April-May 2012:**

The Department of Justice (DOJ) and FBI publicly announce vast expansion of cyber related efforts to address alleged “national security-related cyber issues.”

In violation of longstanding practice, DOJ secretly and without notice **seizes personal and phone records of journalists** from Associated Press from this two-month period in a leak investigation.

### **June 2012:**

Attorney General Holder secretly **initiates investigations** into AP and the New York Times regarding government leaks.

### **June 28, 2012:**

The House of Representatives holds Attorney General Holder in [contempt](#) of Congress for refusing to turn over subpoenaed documents related to Fast and Furious.

### **July 2012:**

The Department of Justice designates U.S. Attorneys’ offices to act as “force multipliers” in further stepped-up cyber efforts in the name of national security.

Intruders remotely “refresh” ongoing surveillance of Attkisson’s CBS News Toshiba laptop.

### **Summer 2012:**

The FBI **incidentally stumbles across** emails revealing CIA Director Petraeus’ affair with his biographer Broadwell. FBI Director Robert Mueller is notified of the affair on a date the

government will not disclose. The FBI later says it interviewed Petraeus and Broadwell, and concluded national security hasn't been breached. The FBI keeps all of this information secret.

In late summer, on a date the government won't reveal, the FBI notifies Attorney General Holder of the Petraeus affair.

### **September 11, 2012:**

Four Americans, including U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens are murdered in Benghazi, Libya during attacks by Islamic extremist terrorists. Despite internal communications that acknowledge the terrorist nature of the attacks within minutes, the Obama administration falsely reports to the public that the attacks were instead a protest gone awry after an anti-Islamic YouTube video.

Some Obama officials become frustrated with CIA Director Petraeus and his post-Benghazi attack behavior, as he opposes efforts to edit out mentions of terrorism from the public Benghazi talking points. Petraeus deputy Mike Morell is given authority over the edits, and aligns with Hillary Clinton's State Department against Petraeus's desires.

### **October 2012:**

CBS begins airing Attkisson's Benghazi stories which **rely on whistleblowers** and numerous government-linked confidential sources. These sources report that the Executive Branch is clamping down on leaks to reporters re: Benghazi.

DOJ continues its stepped-up National Security Division cyber efforts, holding specialized training at DOJ headquarters for the

National Security Cyber Specialists (NSCS) network and the Criminal Division's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section (CCIPS).

President Obama issues top secret presidential directive on Oct. 16 ordering intelligence officials to draw up a list of overseas targets for cyberattacks. According to The Guardian, the directive also "contemplates the possible use of cyber actions inside the US."

As CIA Director Petraeus's interagency relationships become increasingly strained over his stance on Benghazi, unnamed **FBI agents reach out to Republicans in Congress to tell about Petraeus's affair**. They eventually land at the office of Republican majority leader Eric Cantor. With the presidential elections about a week away, Cantor stays mum on the Petraeus rumors and instead contacts the FBI about them.

The FBI interviews Petraeus and Broadwell a second time.

### **November 2, 2012:**

The FBI questions President Obama's vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James Cartwright in a **leak investigation** regarding material in a book written by a New York Times reporter. Cartwright denies being the source (but later admits he was, and is convicted in the case).

### **November 6, 2012:**

President Obama defeats Mitt Romney in Campaign 2012.

CIA Director Petraeus is scheduled to testify to Congress next week about the Benghazi attacks.

Officials claim this day is the first time Director of National Intelligence Clapper is notified about the Petraeus affair by an unspecified official at the Justice Department. Clapper calls Petraeus and urges him to resign.

### **November 7-9, 2012:**

Attorney General Holder hosts a national training conference at DOJ headquarters for the expanded efforts of DOJ's National Security Cyber Specialists (NSCS).

The Obama administration says somebody unspecified notifies someone at the White House about the Petraeus affair on Nov. 7. The President is reportedly looped in for the first time on Nov. 8 and accepts Petraeus' [resignation](#) on Nov. 9. Petraeus' planned appearance before Congress to testify on Benghazi is canceled.

### **November 13, 2012:**

The F.B.I. initiates a body of cyber security case investigations that would later relate to Attkisson's computer intrusions.

### **December 2012:**

Two intelligence-connected sources separately suggest to Attkisson that she's **likely under government surveillance** due to her reporting. One source tells her the government has pushed the envelope like never before and that public would be shocked to "learn the extent that the government is conducting surveillance of private citizens."

As Attkisson arranges a forensic exam of her computer, evidence later shows the intruders then attempted to cover their tracks



and to erase evidence of their intrusion. However, the erasures leave additional forensic evidence.

**December 27, 2012:**

Sens. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) and Mark Udall (D-Colo.), who have classified knowledge as members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, publicly warn of the “back-door search loophole” or **searches of incidental collection of innocent Americans.**

“As it is written, there is nothing to prohibit the intelligence community from searching through a pile of communications, which may have been incidentally or accidentally been collected without a warrant, to deliberately search for the phone calls or e-mails of specific Americans.—Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colorado.”



Sen. Mark Udall

**2013:**

Obama administration brings court martial against Army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning, who has changed his name to Chelsea, for a 2010 leak of classified information to WikiLeaks that revealed American military and diplomatic activities across the world. Manning is [sentenced](#) to 35 years in prison, the longest punishment ever given in a U.S. leak case.

## **January 2013:**

Two forensics examinations confirm **unauthorized remote intrusions** and monitoring of Attkisson's work and personal computers. The information is not publicly reported at this time.

## **January 23, 2013:**

The Obama administration **prosecutes CIA whistleblower John Kiriakou for leaks to a reporter** as he blew the whistle on the CIA's secret torture program. He's the first CIA officer convicted of providing classified information to a reporter.

## **March 12, 2013:**

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testifies to Congress, [falsely](#) stating that intelligence officials are not collecting mass [data](#) on tens of millions of Americans.



### **April 12, 2013:**

The government Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Agency (FISA) court **secretly approves** the latest [FBI request](#) to continue obtaining daily telephone records of millions of U.S. Verizon customers. The judge orders Verizon to turn over the information to the National Security Agency (NSA). This directly contradicts Clapper's March 12 testimony to Congress.

### **April 2013:**

A secret government [memo](#) later exposed by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden discusses how the U.S. is collecting information “directly from the servers of ...Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple.”

### **May 10, 2013:**

After longstanding denials, the IRS admits to and [apologizes](#) for targeting Republican Tea Party groups for mischief, which included discussing developing pretenses for prosecution, leading up to the 2012 election.

### **May 13, 2013:**

The Associated Press (AP) publicly announces that it has learned of the Justice Department’s [secret subpoena](#) of phone records for 20 AP reporters, in a leak investigation. Attorney General Holder personally approved the subpoenas, which were issued to Verizon rather than AP. AP calls it a **“massive and unprecedented intrusion”** into news-gathering operations.

### **May 17, 2013:**

Fox News learns that the Justice Department **secretly labeled reporter James Rosen a possible “criminal co-conspirator”** and “flight-risk” in obtaining warrants to monitor Rosen’s State Department movements, phone records and emails in a leak investigation starting in 2011.

### **June 2013:**

The FBI secretly opens a case on Attkisson’s computer intrusions under the auspices of a national security issue. The FBI contacts CBS without Attkisson’s knowledge, but fails to

contact or interview Attkisson. (The FBI later withholds Attkisson's FBI file in its entirety without explanation, and other documents, despite multiple Freedom of Information Act requests.)

News of the FBI case involving Attkisson's computer intrusions is circulated internally to the Justice Department's national cyber security group, and grouped with a set of cases opened in November 2012.

### **June 2013:**

Former National Security Agency NSA contractor Snowden begins releasing [documents](#) showing extensive efforts by the government to surveil and collect information on U.S. citizens.

Snowden is charged with three felonies in his absence from the U.S.



NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden. Photo by  
Laura Poitras

**June 6, 2013:**

At a hearing, Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Illinois, [asks](#) Attorney General Eric Holder if the NSA spies on members of Congress. Holder [answers](#) that the **NSA has no "intent" to spy on Congress**, but that the issue is better addressed in private.

## **July 2, 2013:**

Director of National Intelligence Clapper [apologizes](#) to Congress for his **false testimony** in March regarding widespread collection of data on Americans.

## **August 6, 2013:**

Armed Coast Guard agents under the Department of Homeland Security raid the home of reporter Audrey Hudson at 4:30am with a search warrant for her husband's firearms. As they searched the house, they read Hudson her Miranda rights and confiscated documents that contained "confidential notes, draft articles, and other newsgathering materials" belonging to Hudson including the identities of whistleblowers at the Department of Homeland Security. (Hudson sues and later receives a [settlement](#) from the government.)

## **August 7, 2013:**

CBS News publicly [announces](#) confirmation of Attkisson's computer intrusions.

"Attkisson's computer was accessed by an unauthorized, external, unknown party on multiple occasions late in 2012...This party also used sophisticated methods to remove all possible indications of unauthorized activity, and alter system times to cause further confusion."—CBS News

## **September 19, 2013**

The Obama Justice Department [charges](#) FBI agent and contractor Donald Sachtleben with leaking to an AP reporter



details of disrupted terrorist bomb plot. He's sentenced to 43 months in prison.

### **January 23, 2014:**

Sen. Bernie Sanders [asks the NSA](#) if it spies on members of Congress. The NSA does not provide a direct answer and [states](#) that Congress is afforded "the same privacy protections as all U.S. persons."

### **March 2014:**

Congress accuses the **CIA of improperly accessing Senate Intelligence committee computers**. CIA Director Brennan denies it.

Director of National Intelligence Clapper bans intelligence community officials from unauthorized contact with reporters.

### **April 2, 2014:**

Former state department contractor Stephen Jin-Woo Kim is [sentenced](#) to prison for disclosing classified information to Fox News reporter James Rosen.

### **July 31, 2014:**

CIA Inspector General [reveals](#) that five **CIA officials improperly accessed Senate Intelligence Committee computers** and searched certain staff emails. The findings contradict denials made in March by CIA director Brennan. Brennan apologizes to Senate staff.

### **October 2014:**

The government pays a [settlement](#) to reporter Audrey Hudson after the 2013 Coast Guard raid of her home during which her work notes were improperly seized.

### **December 2014:**

Attorney General Holder seeks to [subpoena](#) a 60 Minutes producer in connection with a terrorism trial, but pulls back the request after public criticism.

### **Spring 2015:**

The Obama administration finishes secretive negotiations of an Iran nuclear deal that will return billions of dollars in frozen funds to the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism in return for assurances from that country. It's later reported that Obama intel officials have been **incidentally capturing communications** of U.S. members of Congress and organizations in the U.S. while secretly recording Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's discussions about the Iran deal, which he opposes.

As of now, the New York Times reports "since 2009, six current or former government employees and two government contractors have been indicted or prosecuted under the Espionage Act for leaking information to the public. There were only three such prosecutions under all previous U.S. presidents combined since 1917."

### **May 2015:**

Former CIA employee Jeffrey Alexander Sterling is convicted on espionage charges for **leaks to New York Times reporter** James

Risen. He's sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison.

### **December 2015:**

The Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act (CISA) [passes](#). It requires private Internet companies to “transmit cyber-threat indicators” to the Department of Homeland Security and granting the companies immunity from prosecution for sharing customers’ personal data in those cases.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) reports that the Obama administration incidentally **collected private communications by members of Congress** while it spied on Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.

“The NSA sweeping up “private conversations with U.S. lawmakers and American-Jewish groups... raised fears [of]—an ‘Oh-s— moment,’ one senior U.S. official said—that the executive branch would be accused of spying on Congress.”—Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2015.”

### **July 2016:**

Donald Trump wins the Republican nomination for president.



According to later news reports, after Trump's nomination, internal White House logs show Obama National Security Adviser Susan Rice begins to show increased interest in National Security Agency (NSA) intelligence material that included "unmasked" Americans' identities.



Former Obama national security adviser Susan Rice

**Summer 2016:**

The FBI reportedly tries to obtain a secret FISA court order to **monitor communications of Trump adviser Carter Page**, alleging that Page is acting as a Russian agent. The application is turned down but approved in October when the anti-Trump “dossier” is included to justify the wiretap application.

[Read: When “Incidental” Intel Collection Isn’t Incidental](#)

Former Trump adviser Carter Page

**2016:**

It's not yet known publicly, but CNN later reports that the Obama Justice Department wiretapped Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort before the 2016 election over Russia ties, closed the investigation, then began surveillance anew sometime in the fall and continued it through the early part of 2017.

**Fall 2016:**

Trump opponents “shop” to reporters a political opposition research “dossier” alleging Trump is guilty of various inappropriate acts regarding Russia. The information is unverified (and some of it is false) and the press doesn't publish it, but a copy is provided to the FBI.

**September 26, 2016:**

It's not publicly known at the time, but the government makes a [proposal](#) to the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) court to allow the National Counter Terrorism Center to access "unmasked" intel on Americans acquired by the FBI and NSA. (The Court later approves as "appropriate".)

**October 7, 2016:**

Former vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James Cartwright pleads guilty in a leak investigation to lying to the FBI about his discussions with reporters regarding Iran's nuclear program.

**October 26, 2016:**

At closed-door hearing before the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the Obama administration [disclosed](#) that it had been violating surveillance safeguards, according to [Circa](#). It disclosed that more than 5 percent of its searches of the NSA's database violated safeguards promised in 2011.

**November 8, 2016:**

Donald Trump is elected President.

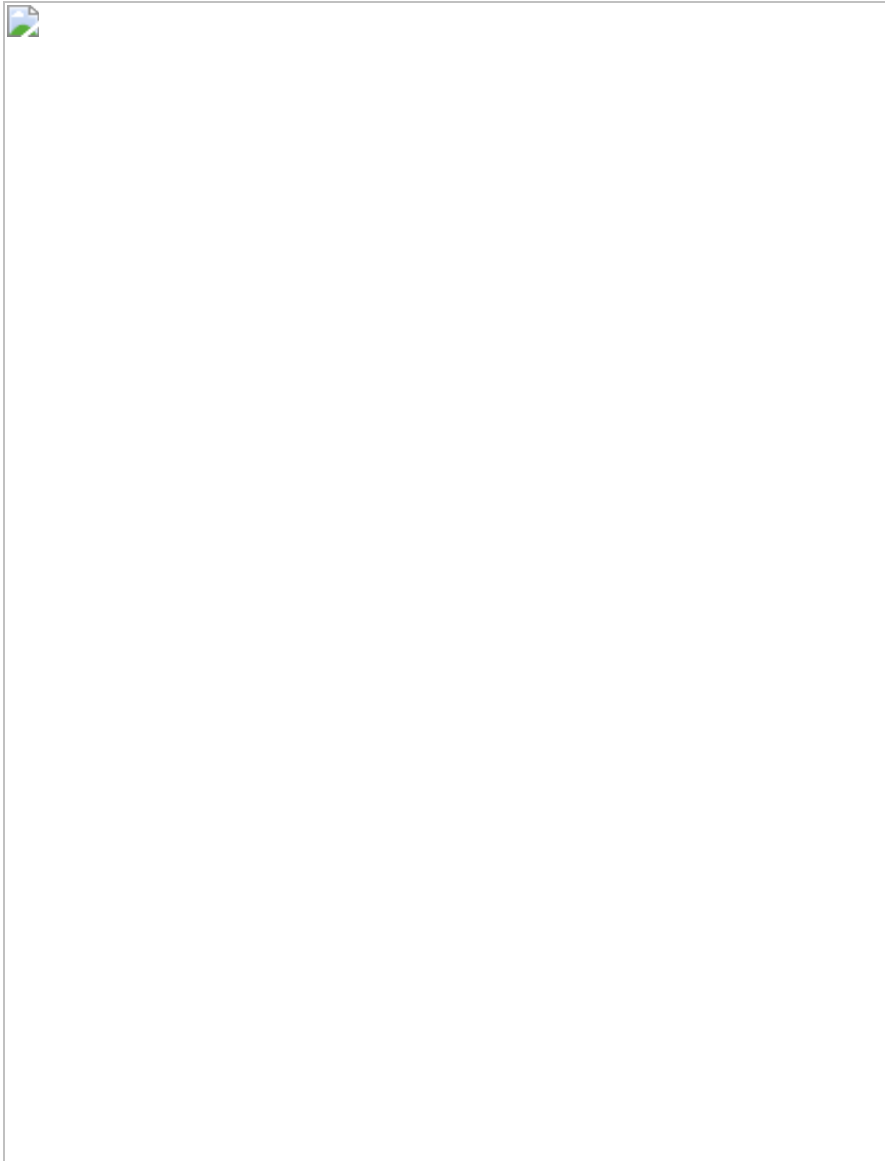
### **November 2016-January 2017:**

News [reports](#) claim **Rice's interest in the NSA materials accelerates** after President Trump's election through his January inauguration. Surveillance reportedly included Trump transition figures and/or foreign officials discussing a Trump administration.

### **December 2016:**



FBI secretly monitors and records communications between Russian ambassador, [Sergey Kislyak](#) and Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, who later became President Trump's national security adviser.



Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak

After Trump's election, Obama officials take steps to ensure certain intelligence gathered regarding Trump associates is **"spread across the government."** One Obama official would

later say it's because they were afraid once Trump officials "found out how we knew what we knew," the intelligence would be destroyed. However, Obama critics later theorize Obama officials were working to mount opposition to Trump's presidency.

### **December 15, 2016:**

National Security Adviser Susan Rice later reportedly [acknowledged](#) that the Obama administration spied on Trump officials in Trump Tower on this date, but claimed it was incidental to the administration's spying on the foreign leader they were meeting with: the UAE crown prince. Rice also reportedly admitted to "unmasking" the names of the Trump officials who met with the crown prince, saying it was important to know who they were, although the identities of Americans are supposed to be strictly protected except in extraordinary circumstances. Trump officials who met with the crown prince reportedly included: Steve Bannon, Jared Kushner and Gen. Michael Flynn.

### **January 10, 2017:**

The media reports on the leaked anti-Trump "dossier" compiled by a political opposition research group containing unverified and at least partly untrue allegations of misconduct involving Trump and Russia.

### **January 12, 2017:**

The Obama administration finalizes [new rules](#) allowing the National Security Agency (NSA) to spread certain intelligence

to 16 other U.S. intel agencies without the normal privacy protections.

President Obama commutes all but the last four months of Manning's sentence for leaking intelligence information to WikiLeaks.

### **February 2, 2017:**

The news [reports](#) that five information technology (IT) computer professionals employed by Democrats in the House of Representatives are under criminal investigation for allegedly "accessing House IT systems without lawmakers' knowledge." The suspects include three brothers identified as Abid, Imran and Jamal Awan "who managed office information technology for members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and other lawmakers." The brothers were [said](#) to have been employed by three Democrats on the Intelligence Committee and "five members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs which deal with with many of the nation's most sensitive issues and documents, including those related to the war on terrorism."

### **February 9, 2017:**

[News](#) of the FBI recordings of Lt. Gen. Flynn speaking with Russia's ambassador is leaked to the press. The New York Times and the Washington Post report that **Flynn was captured on wiretaps** discussing current U.S. sanctions, despite Flynn's earlier denials.

The Washington Post also reports the FBI reviewed Flynn's calls with Russian ambassador and "found nothing illicit."



Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn

**Feb. 13, 2017:**

Trump National Security Adviser Flynn [resigns](#), acknowledging he had misled Vice President Pence about his Russia conversations.

**March 2017:**

The House Intelligence Committee requests a list of unmasking requests made during a certain time period by Obama officials. The intelligence committee does not provide the information, prompting a June 1 subpoena.

**March 1, 2017:**

The Washington Post learns and reports that Trump Attorney General Jeff Sessions has met with the Russian ambassador twice in the recent past. Sessions had told Congress he didn't communicate with the Russians during the campaign. (The Russian ambassador had sought out and met with numerous high-ranking Democrat and Republican officials.)



Attorney General Jeff Sessions

**March 2, 2017:**

In an interview on MSNBC, Obama Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Evelyn Farkas says that once President Trump was elected, she [urged](#) her former colleagues to “get as much information as you can, **get as much intelligence as you can** [about Trump and his associates] before President Obama leaves the administration” and get it to “people on Capitol Hill.”



Former Obama Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
Defense for Russia, Evelyn Farkas

Trump Attorney General Jeff Sessions [recuses](#) himself from any Trump campaign-related investigations after backtracking on earlier statements that he had not met with Russian officials prior to the election.

**March 4, 2017:**

President Trump tweets: "Is it legal for a sitting President to be 'wire tapping' a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW!" and "How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"

### **March 10, 2017:**

Former Congressman Dennis Kucinich, a Democrat, steps forward to support Trump's wiretapping claim, [revealing](#) that the **Obama administration recorded his (Kucinich's) communications** with a Libyan official in Spring 2011.

### **March 20, 2017:**

At a hearing, lead House Intelligence Committee Democrat Adam Schiff places Trump adviser Carter Page at the center of a theoretical alleged collusion with Russia. (It's not yet publicly known that the FBI has been surveilling Page.) Some critics see Schiff's storyline as an attempt to establish public justification for the Obama administration intel community's controversial surveillance of the Trump adviser during the 2016 political campaign.





Rep. Adam Schiff

**March 22, 2017:**

Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee Devin Nunes publicly announces that he has reviewed evidence of U.S. citizens associated with Trump being “incidentally” surveilled by Obama intelligence officials, and that the names and information of the Trump associates were illegally leaked and/or used, mostly in November, December and January. Nunes attends a meeting at the White House to discuss. He’s criticized for viewing the evidence and speaking of it publicly.

In an interview on PBS, former Obama National Security Adviser Rice says “I know nothing about this...I really don’t know to what Chairman Nunes was referring.”



Rep. Devin Nunes

**March 24, 2017:**

The political firm that compiled the Trump “dossier” that was leaked to the press, Fusion GPS, declines to answer questions or document requests from Sen. Charles Grassley.

**March 31, 2017:**

Democrat Schiff is invited to the White House to review intel material Republican Nunes saw earlier.

**April 3, 2017:**

Multiple [news](#) reports state that prior to the election, **Rice had requested and reviewed “unmasked” intelligence** on Trump associates whose information was “incidentally” collected by intelligence agencies.

**April 4, 2017:**

In an interview on MSNBC, Rice seems to [reverse](#) herself (having earlier said she knew “nothing” about unmasking of surveilled Trump associates) and admits having asked for names of U.S. citizens previously masked in intelligence reports. Rice says her motivations were not political or to spy. When asked if she leaked names of U.S. citizens, Rice replies, “I leaked nothing to nobody.”

**April 6, 2017:**

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Nunes recuses himself from the Russia part of his committee’s investigation.

**April 11, 2017:**

Someone leaks to the Washington Post, and the Post [reports](#), that the **FBI secretly obtained a FISA court order** last summer to monitor Trump campaign associate Carter Page. Trump critics say the existence of the order proves there was possible criminal activity by Trump associates. However, Trump supporters say the leak is an attempt to frame damning revelations as they are

coming to light: that the Obama administration was, indeed, surveilling the political campaign of at least one opponent.

### **April 28, 2017:**

The NSA announces it “will no longer collect certain internet communications that merely [mention](#) a foreign intelligence target.” This after it secretly disclosed mass violations to the [FISA](#) court last October.

The NSA also begins deleting prior collected data. It says it’s doing this to avoid further violations.

### **May 2, 2017:**

Members of Senate Intelligence Committee go to CIA headquarters to get briefed on Russia-Trump connections. The following day, CNN asks Senate Intelligence Committee member Dianne Feinstein if there is evidence of “collusion between Trump associates and Russia during the campaign.” “Not at this time,” replies Feinstein.

### **May 3, 2017:**

Obama’s former National Security Adviser Susan Rice declines Republican Congressional request to testify at a hearing about the unmasking and surveillance.

### **May 4, 2017:**

It’s [revealed](#) that in the election year of 2016, the Obama administration vastly expanded its searches of NSA database for Americans and the content of their emails and phone calls: From

9500 searches involving 198 Americans in 2013 to 30,355 searches of 5,288 Americans in 2016.

**May 5, 2017:**

Senator and former Presidential candidate Rand Paul (R-KY) formally [asks](#) the White House and intelligence community whether he was surveilled under the Obama administration.

**May 14, 2017:**

Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and ex-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, Obama administration officials, [admit](#) to reviewing “classified documents in which Mr. Trump, his associates or members of Congress had been unmasked.” They won’t provide further details in public.

**May 31, 2017:**

Document is [disclosed](#) to Justice Department in a lawsuit claiming the NSA engaged in “blanket surveillance” of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, collecting and storing “virtually all electronic communications going into or out of the Salt Lake City area, including the contents of emails and text messages” to “experiment with and fine tune a new scale of mass surveillance.” Former CIA and NSA director Michael Hayden has denied such a program existed.

**June 1, 2017:**

House Intelligence Committee issues 7 [subpoenas](#) including for information related to unmaskings requested by ex-Obama officials national security adviser Susan Rice, former CIA Director John Brennan and former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Samantha

Power. Chairman Devin Nunes says the intelligence community has been stonewalling the committee's March request for a list of all the unmaskings that occurred during a certain time period.

**Sept. 13, 2017**

Under questioning from Congress, former Obama adviser Susan Rice reportedly [admits](#) having requested to see the protected identities of Trump transition officials who were "incidentally" captured by government surveillance. (For their privacy protection, identities of U.S. citizens captured during surveillance of foreign foreign targets are supposed to be protected or "masked" from other government officials. Applications by federal officials to "unmask" the names or see the identities are supposed to be rare and carefully considered.

**Sept. 18, 2017:**

CNN reports that the Obama Justice Department wiretapped Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort before the 2016 election over Russia ties, closed the investigation, then began surveillance anew sometime in the fall and continued it through the early part of 2017.

**October 17, 2017:**

After word that Obama U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power had made near daily unmasking requests during the 2016 election year, Power reportedly told Congressional investigators that many of the requests in her name were [not made](#) by her.

Fight government overreach and double-standard justice by supporting the [Attkisson Fourth Amendment Litigation Fund](#) for

Attkisson v. DOJ and FBI for the government computer intrusions. [Click here](#).

Buy [The Smear](#): How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think and How You Vote.

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Filed Under: [News](#) Tagged With: [obama surveillance timeline](#), [surveillance abuse](#)

 Sharyl Attkisson

### **About Sharyl Attkisson**

Emmy-Award Winning Investigative Journalist, New York Times Best Selling Author, Host of Sinclair's Full Measure

# Reader Interactions

## Comments

1.  AvatarHal Ward says

[April 16, 2017 at 11:22 am](#)

Fantastic time line, but somewhat depressing as it clearly points out the frequency of how often the government stomps on the citizens rights.

- o  AvatarTM says

[April 20, 2017 at 5:59 pm](#)

OBAMA'S government.

- o  AvatarNorm Astwood says

[September 25, 2017 at 7:24 pm](#)

This is not something you will read in the NY Times or Washington Post.

- o  Avatarjjk says

[September 25, 2017 at 8:18 pm](#)

And yet there are no consequences for anyone.

2.  AvatarNathan Calfey says

[April 16, 2017 at 12:20 pm](#)



Sharyl Attkisson is magnificent reporter.

-  AvatarSara Johnson says

[April 17, 2017 at 9:18 am](#)

Yes, she is great at reporting. Glad we still have her here to keep citizens organized and informed.

-  Avatar[Margaret Walker](#) says

[April 18, 2017 at 2:11 pm](#)

Thank you , Sharyl. You deserve a Pulitzer Prize for all your hard work and integrity. If only there was more outrage.

3.  AvatarJames Thomas says

[April 16, 2017 at 12:43 pm](#)

Great job with the timeline. I had forgotten that Obama targeted you, too. Of course what is unknown is how hard Republicans are going to try to get to the bottom of these operations.

4.  AvatarMark Jordan says

[April 16, 2017 at 3:41 pm](#)

Thank you, Sharyl. You paid a price to dig into Obama's secrets but I believe you will be rewarded some day ... hopefully soon.

5.  AvatarSkully says

[April 16, 2017 at 4:37 pm](#)

Sheryl

Thanks for the timeline. It seems that most of the MSM, including Fox have a short term memory problem. Not one has taken the time to step back and connect the dots.

Everything comes in snippets here and there, but it's like every revelation is in its own world. Thanks for having the courage to be a REAL investigative journalist, not like these slimy talking heads who only want to listen to themselves speak. God bless and Happy Easter.

6.  Avatarpipedream says

[April 16, 2017 at 4:54 pm](#)

Sheryl – You are the only reporter doing this.....and thank God you are. I pray for your safety and for continuing courage as you fight to bring out the truth. Please keep it up! We need you because the MSM won't cover anything that doesn't fit their narrative.

7.  AvatarDave Andrews says

[April 16, 2017 at 5:21 pm](#)

The Obama administration may go down as one of the most corrupt of all time, but one would never know if one just read and listened to the liberal mainstream media. It is a dark period for journalism. Thanks very much for being so diligent. Facts matter.

o  Avatar [Matthew W](#) says

[April 17, 2017 at 8:43 am](#)

I don't think that there is any doubt that the NObama administration will be the most corrupt and criminal ever.

But, since of the American population supports that administration and the other half of the American population has Congressmen that will never do anything about it.....

-  AvatarDeoxy says

[May 25, 2017 at 10:07 am](#)

Obama's administration probably won't be the most corrupt EVER, as all human institutions come to an end, and likely, that will take even greater corruption, but it's certainly the most corrupt SO FAR, and I hope I don't live long enough to see one that is worse.

8.  AvatarUdo says

[April 16, 2017 at 6:39 pm](#)

Terrific but simultaneously worthless.

Can't copy and paste it (yeah, yeah, yeah, I give credit to the author)

Get rid of the Walmart photos and tighten up the copy.

9.  AvatarAnthony says

[April 17, 2017 at 12:24 am](#)

There is more:

\*General Thomas McInernery discusses "THE HAMMER" the wiretapping of Donald Trump "A Zillion Times" by secret super computer of Brennan and Clapper - The American Report

<http://theamericanreport.org/2017/03/22/general-thomas-mcinernery-discusses-hammer-wiretapping-donald-trump-zillion-times-secret-super-computer-brennan-clapper/>

Whistleblower Tapes: Trump Wiretapped "A Zillion Times" By 'The Hammer,' Brennan's and Clapper's Secret Computer System - The American Report

<http://theamericanreport.org/2017/03/17/whistleblower-tapes-trump-wiretapped-zillion-times-hammer-brennans-clappers-secret-computer-system/>

10.  Avatar [Peter Venetoklis](#) says

[April 17, 2017 at 8:13 am](#)

Superb recap, thank you.

After reading this, and adding it to the long and sordid history of government misdeeds, who can honestly declare that they still trust "the government?" Not Democratic government, not Republican government, "the government?"

It's when we accept the bad behavior of "our team" because we think the "other team" will be worse that we facilitate and enable such excesses.

<http://www.pigsandsheep.org/do-you-trust-the-government/>

11.  AvatarKathy Barkulis says

[April 17, 2017 at 8:20 am](#)

Sheryl, I feel that CBS News could have been more proactive reporting just how deep this scandal was knowing that you were being surveilled by the government for your reporting. The mainstream media has the ability to expose government wrongdoing in a widespread way if only they would do their job. That is the purpose of the press, but they have failed miserably. Apparently the government was afraid of your reporting along with James Rosen for trying to expose the criminality of the Obama administration. Yet nothing seems to happen to Democrats when they break the law. Why is it always the Republicans who recuse themselves? Congress needs to step in and clean up the intelligence agencies, as well as prosecute the criminals. And there are many.

o  Avatarjan perkins says

[April 17, 2017 at 9:34 pm](#)

CBS couldnt do that because the president of cbs news is a brother to ben rhodes, the deputy national security advisor to obama at the time

12.  Avatar[Matthew W](#) says

[April 17, 2017 at 8:33 am](#)

Isn't it amazing how many times Liberals get to "apologize" for LYING to Congress and they NEVER get punished.

13.  AvatarDaniel Robertson says

[April 17, 2017 at 9:28 am](#)

The article left out one of the most shocking peripheral tidbits:

when James Rosen visited his parents he used their telephone to talk to one of his contacts.

That act by Rosen got his own parents on the surveillance list.

So it wasn't just reporters, it was even the innocent PARENTS of reporters who got secretly surveilled..!!

14.  AvatarRick says

[April 17, 2017 at 2:53 pm](#)

Sharyl, please don't take up any high risk activities like jogging. These people will stop at nothing to silence their opposition. Stonewalled was a great read, however, very scary. Keep up the great work!

15.  AvatarD P McDonough says

[April 17, 2017 at 4:06 pm](#)

Imagine if the Bush administration had pulled this stuff. Everyone would know this timeline by rote because its all the meat puppets would be screeching about.

16.  Avatardave donovan says

[April 17, 2017 at 4:17 pm](#)

Thanks for letting us deplorables know the truth. Please investigate the living Challenger disaster victims. Maybe a little sniff at the Air Traffic Control actions, or lack thereof, at La Guardia and Kennedy, before and after the towers were hit on Sept.11, 2001. TOO SCARY ???

You are the best investigative reporter around !!!!!

17.  Avatarsissy.right says

[April 17, 2017 at 5:03 pm](#)

You go Sharyl. You rock! A rare commodity in today's purported journalism. You are believable. Didn't Brennan convert to Islam, too?

18.  AvatarMatt Arnett says

[April 17, 2017 at 5:04 pm](#)

Amazingly well done! Thank you for your research and updating us!!!

19.  AvatarCorky Boyd says

[April 17, 2017 at 9:04 pm](#)

Excellent compendium of the misdeeds of the Obama administration. And you were in the middle of it and survived. Hopefully there are folks who will go public with what they know, maybe with a promise of clemency. Several in the senior levels of the FBI, NSA and CIA are probably sweating bricks that their house of cards will soon collapse.

Don't know what your contract agreements were with CBS when you left, but I hope some day you land at Fox News. There may be an opening in the 8:00pm slot. You would fit well there.

20.  AvatarP. Aaron says

[April 17, 2017 at 9:33 pm](#)

Once again, it looks like corruption at the highest levels of the Obama administration.

21.  AvatarET Gwynn says

[April 17, 2017 at 10:02 pm](#)

Attkisson is a wonderment. She is possessed of huge courage, both moral and physical, accompanied by a sense of righteousness that has served America well.

One can only wish all public servants could garner even a little bit of the same for themselves, and America

o  AvatarE. Majors says

[April 19, 2017 at 9:18 am](#)

YES. This.



The Attkisson brand is the best.

22.  AvatarHeidi says

[April 17, 2017 at 11:02 pm](#)

Lets not forget a week before the contempt finding President Obama asserted executive privilege over the Fast and Furious records, therefore protecting Eric Holder. Was anything ever discovered in the Vaughn Index?

23.  AvatarBen Fitzgerald says

[April 18, 2017 at 5:05 am](#)

Sharyl Attkisson is perhaps the last true journalist on the planet, holding to the principles of true journalism. Most so called "Journalists" are little more than members of the media.

"Opinion reporters and those who work for obviously ideological news groups are entitled to publish party propaganda. It's one matter to provide viewpoint journalism. But it's quite another for us to act as a tool of any interest, publishing narratives or talking points upon suggestion or demand, without disclosing we've done just that."—Sharyl Attkisson

24.  AvatarJerry Tetro says

[April 18, 2017 at 11:05 am](#)

Should've ended the time line with what you started it with, Obama promised the most transparent administration ever,

but severely failed to deliver on that promise.

Seems to me in about six months of FBI investigations, the Obama and friends of his administration will have a lot of explaining to do, if not indictments that they will have to lawyer up for. Can't wait for the perp walk!