

Susan Rice Admits Unmasking Trump Team After Denying Knowing Anything



Screenshot

by [Kristina Wong](#) 14 Sep 2017

Susan Rice admitted to lawmakers last week that she unmasked Trump transition team officials even though earlier this year she denied knowing anything about it.

Rice was asked by *PBS Newshour*'s Judy Woodruff on March 22 about allegations that Trump transition officials were swept up in surveillance of foreigners at the end of the Obama administration.

"I know nothing about this," Rice had said at the time.

However, last week, she told the House intelligence committee that she had unmasked Trump transition team members in order to understand why the Emirati crown prince was [visiting](#) New York late last year, according to a CNN report.

She said the Obama administration "felt misled" by the United Arab Emirates, who had not mentioned that the crown prince was visiting the country.

Rice's admission also showed that Trump transition team members were indeed caught up in surveillance of a foreign target, confirming President Trump's suspicions that his transition team was being surveilled.

The foreign target in this case was apparently the Emiratis, who [call](#) themselves "close friends and strong allies" with the U.S. on its Washington, D.C., website.

Rice's justification—feeling misled—was nowhere near a hypothetical scenario Rice laid out for a reason to unmask during an MSNBC interview on April 4.

During that April interview, Rice laid out a hypothetical scenario of a foreign agent attempting to buy bomb-making materials from a U.S. citizen.

"Is this some kook sitting in his living room communicating via the internet, offering to sell something he doesn't have? Or is it a serious person or company or entity with the ability to provide that technology perhaps to an adversary? That would be an example of a case where knowing who the U.S. person was, was necessary to assess the information," Rice said.

An unnamed senior Middle East official told CNN that the UAE did not "mislead" the Obama administration about the crown prince's visit, but acknowledged not telling the US government about it in advance.

The official told CNN the meeting took place on December 15, and was "simply an effort to build a relationship with senior members of the Trump team who would be working in the administration to share assessments of the region."

"The meeting was about ascertaining the Trump team's view of the region and sharing the UAE's view of the region and what the US role should be," the official told CNN. "No one was coming in to sell anything or arrange anything."

Sources told CNN that the crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, met with several top Trump officials including Michael Flynn, the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and his top strategist Steve Bannon.

CNN noted that the meeting took place before an effort by the UAE to facilitate a "back-channel communication" between Russia and the incoming administration.

Sources told CNN that the discussion focused on a range of issues, including Iran, Yemen and the Mideast peace process, but that opening up a back-channel with Russia was not discussed.

The alleged back-channel meeting set up by the UAE was at the Seychelles Island between Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater, whose sister is Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, and an "associate of Vladimir Putin."

The purpose of the meeting was reportedly an effort by the UAE to persuade Russia to curtail its relationship with Iran.

The senior Middle East official told CNN that Prince was not discussed at the Trump Tower meeting, and Prince has said himself he was there for business.

Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL) told CNN that he did not hear anything to believe that Rice did anything “illegal.”

Unmasking is not illegal, although leaking unmasked names are illegal. Intelligence involving Trump’s former national security adviser Michael Flynn was leaked to the *Washington Post* earlier this year, and it is not yet publicly known who leaked it.