

Duckworth to NSA Director: Did Russians bug the Oval Office?

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) wrote to National Security Agency (NSA) Director Admiral Michael Rogers to ask whether any security sweeps were conducted following the President’s recent meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador, as well as whether any listening or recording devices were found in the Oval Office. In the letter, Duckworth asked Admiral Rogers whether the NSA or the Central Security Service were consulted before top Putin officials and staff were allowed into the Oval Office. She also asked if either agency was asked to provide White House staff or the Secret Service with a training on how to safeguard information. American press were barred from that meeting but Russian state-sponsored media was allowed in, raising concerns about whether any of their equipment was compromised or could have resulted in a security breach.

“The United States Government must counter the hostile actions of the Russian Government and its authoritarian allies, such as Syria and Iran,” wrote Duckworth. “However, I am deeply concerned that President Donald Trump’s increasingly erratic, inconsistent and inflammatory rhetoric and actions undermine our Nation’s ability to execute an effective whole-of-government approach ... I am most alarmed and frustrated, however, at reports that the Commander in Chief used his meeting to deliver highly classified intelligence to the Russian Foreign Minister and Russian Ambassador – who themselves may have been recording the Oval Office meeting, with or without President Trump’s knowledge or approval.”

President Trump’s decision to host Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in the Oval Office came less than 24 hours after Admiral Rogers testified that the NSA was able to warn our critical North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) ally, France, about Russia’s interference in its recent presidential election. In light of Admiral Rogers’ testimony, Duckworth questioned the “strategic logic, value or wisdom of the Commander in Chief’s perplexing decision to honor Russia’s Foreign Minister” with an Oval Office meeting. She also noted how Russia’s continued efforts to influence the outcomes of elections across the world, including the United States, have alarmed the intelligence community. [Duckworth recently wrote](#) to Defense Secretary Mattis expressing her concern that, in light of these threats, the President’s decision to disclose highly classified information to the Russian government could undermine the Defense Department’s development of a comprehensive strategy to confront Russian aggression.

“President Trump’s decision to share sensitive intelligence that was provided by an ally undermines trust and threatens the U.S. Intelligence Community’s ability to gather future information that may be vital to stopping future terrorist plots,” added Duckworth. “Beyond putting our Nation’s security at risk and harming our credibility across the globe, the decision to reveal this information could lead to the loss of life, betraying brave individuals willing to risk everything to help us degrade, disrupt and dismantle ISIL ... It is vital that we better understand the views of Cybercom, NSA and CSS on the status of these efforts and potential damage wrought by President Trump’s unusual affinity and devotion to maintain friendly relations with the Putin Government.”