



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on July 6, 2021

Former CIA, NSC Man: Carlson Is Right. NSA Did Not Deny Reading Emails

A former intelligence official and chief of staff of the National Security Council says that Tucker Carlson is right. The super-secret National Security Agency did not deny Carlson's charge that it read his email.

Though Fred Fleitz laughed when [Carlson accused](#) NSA of eavesdropping, the former Trump NSC man changed his mind after he read the agency's carefully-worded reaction to Carlson's accusation.

A 25-year veteran of the CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency, Fleitz said the agency's answer might explain why so many Americans no longer trust their government.



Tucker Carlson (AP Images)

The Charge, Fleitz Reacts

"We heard from a whistleblower in the government, who reached out to warn us that the NSA, the National Security Agency, is monitoring our electronic communications and is planning to leak them in an attempt to take the show off the air," [Carlson said](#) on June 28:

The NSA captured that information without our knowledge and did it for political reasons.

The Biden administration is spying on us. We have confirmed that.

Fleitz, [chieftain](#) of the [Center for Security Policy](#), was unimpressed.

"I laughed," [he wrote](#) at *The Federalist*. "From my 19 years as a CIA analyst and five years with House Intelligence Committee staff, I found this impossible to believe, for three reasons."

First, "NSA's huge and lumbering bureaucracy would never agree to such a flagrant violation of the agency's foreign intelligence charter to spy on a leading conservative American journalist." Such a violation of rules would be "too risky," he continued. Second, Biden's top people would have to OK the eavesdropping. That, too, would be a risky proposition. Third, Fleitz doesn't care much for "high-profile NSA whistleblowers, too many of whom have been disgruntled former employees pursuing personal agendas."

But then, [Fleitz wrote](#), he saw NSA's "extraordinary denial."

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"Tucker Carlson alleged that the National Security Agency has been 'monitoring our electronic communications and is planning to leak them in an attempt to take this show off the air.' This allegation is untrue," the [spy agency replied](#):



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Tucker Carlson has never been an intelligence target of the Agency and the NSA has never had any plans to try to take his program off the air.

NSA has a foreign intelligence mission. We target foreign powers to generate insights on foreign activities that could harm the United States. With limited exceptions (e.g. an emergency), NSA may not target a U.S. citizen without a court order that explicitly authorizes the targeting.

Carlson, Fleitz observed, followed with this: “We made a very straightforward claim: NSA has read my private emails without my permission. Period. That’s what we said. Tonight’s statement from the NSA does not deny that.”

GOP Representative Justin Amash tweeted likewise:

Don’t know whether NSA is **specifically** spying on Carlson, but this statement is worthless. 1st, it denies a compound allegation re “monitoring” **and** taking show off air. 2nd, it says he’s not a “target,” which is a term of art. Real danger is so-called “incidental collection.”

“Huge Omissions”

Fleitz agrees with Carlson and Amash.

“Let’s be very clear about what the NSA said in its statement,” he wrote, noting that NSA did not deny Carlson’s key charge: The agency read his emails.

Yet “NSA also did not deny that it may have accessed Carlson’s communications through ‘incidental collection,’” [he continued](#):

These were huge omissions, since incidental collection is a well-known and controversial way the NSA collects vast amounts of Americans’ communications without warrants. This happens when an innocent American communicates with a legitimate NSA target, such as someone believed to be under the control of or to be collaborating with a hostile foreign power.

When this happens, the name of the innocent American is supposed to be “redacted” or masked. There are very strict rules on how incidentally collected communications of U.S citizens can be used.

Trouble is, Fleitz continued, NSA landed in trouble five years ago when it unmasked, at the request of President Obama’s torpedoes, Trump campaign officials in 2016.

“In addition, in 2017 the NSA claims it ended its controversial “upstream collection” surveillance practice of collecting email traffic of American citizens merely because it contained an email address or phone number of a foreign target,” Fleitz wrote.

Thus, the NSA’s “non-denial ... raises some serious questions. Why did the NSA not flatly state it never accessed Carlson’s communications? Were Carlson’s communications ‘unmasked’ at the request of



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White House officials?”

Continued Fleitz:

Susan Rice admitted she unmasked Trump campaign aides during the Obama administration and now serves in the Biden White House. Has Rice resumed her previous efforts to weaponize NSA reporting against the political enemies of another Democratic president?

A more troubling question is whether this story, if true, indicates that NSA did not actually halt its “upstream collection” of emails, as it claimed in 2017.

House Republicans [are investigating](#) Carlson’s charge.

But that aside, Fleitz averred, it’s time for NSA to come clean, or firmly deny reading Carlson’s emails because “stories like this undermine Americans’ faith in their government and the integrity of our foreign intelligence agencies, which exist to defend our nation against hostile foreign powers.”

The NSA [has a long history](#) of spying on Americans, as Edward Snowden’s major leak to NSA documents in 2013 showed. The Church Committee learned from [Puzzle Palace](#) author [James Bamford](#) in 1975 that the agency eavesdropped on Americans back then.

Founded in 1952, the NSA grew out of the military’s cryptological efforts during World War II and is responsible for signals intelligence.

Hat tip: [Powerline](#)



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