

MARK CORALLO'S OBSTRUCTION CONCERNS: "THE PRESIDENT...DID NOT ATTEND THE MEETING."

Mark Corallo reportedly told Michael Wolff that he quit working for Donald Trump as Marc Kasowitz' spokesperson because he believed the Air Force One response to the June 9 meeting to be a cover-up.

An aggrieved, unyielding, and threatening president dominated the discussion, pushing into line his daughter and her husband, Hicks, and Raffel. Kasowitz—the lawyer whose specific job was to keep Trump at arm's length from Russian-related matters—was kept on hold on the phone for an hour and then not put through. The president insisted that the meeting in Trump Tower was purely and simply about Russian adoption policy. That's what was discussed, period. Period. Even though it was likely, if not certain, that the Times had the incriminating email chain—in fact, it was quite possible that Jared and Ivanka and the lawyers knew the Times had this email chain—the president ordered that no one should let on to the more problematic discussion about Hillary Clinton.

[snip]

In Washington, Kasowitz and the legal team's spokesperson, Mark Corallo, weren't informed of either the Times article or the plan for how to respond to it until Don Jr.'s initial statement went out just before the story broke that Saturday.

[snip]

Mark Corallo was instructed not to speak to the press, indeed not to even answer his phone. Later that week, Corallo, seeing no good outcome—and privately confiding that he believed the meeting on Air Force One represented a likely obstruction of justice—quit.

Though as the book makes clear, Trump’s handling (which came just after spending an hour speaking with Vladimir Putin with no minders) of the June 9 meeting story is also what led Kasowitz to leave – both parts of a legal firewall that Steve Bannon had personally put in place.

Given my increasing suspicion that there was a second part of the meeting that has not yet been made public and Bannon’s claim – one Stephen Miller spent 12 minutes not denying over the weekend – that there was no chance that Trump wasn’t part of the meeting, I want to look more closely at the things Corallo said before he was silenced, before the former DOJ spox left out of concerns real obstruction of justice had just occurred.

Here’s some of what appeared in the first NYT story on the June 9 meeting, including a Mark Corallo statement that got repeated elsewhere.

In his statement, Donald Trump Jr. said: “It was a short introductory meeting. I asked Jared and Paul to stop by. We primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children that was active and popular with American families years ago and was since ended by the Russian government, but it was not a campaign issue at the time and there was no follow up.”

He added: “I was asked to attend the meeting by an acquaintance, but was not told the name of the person I would be meeting with beforehand.”

Late Saturday, Mark Corallo, a spokesman for the president's lawyer, issued a statement implying that the meeting was a setup. Ms. Veselnitskaya and the translator who accompanied her to the meeting "misrepresented who they were," it said.

In an interview, Mr. Corallo explained that Ms. Veselnitskaya, in her anti-Magnitsky campaign, employs a private investigator whose firm, Fusion GPS, produced an intelligence dossier that contained unproven allegations against the president. In a statement, the firm said, "Fusion GPS learned about this meeting from news reports and had no prior knowledge of it. Any claim that Fusion GPS arranged or facilitated this meeting in any way is false."

That's interesting enough, because it piggy backs on the larger efforts to treat the dossier as the sole basis for the Russian investigation, *and more importantly* because it focuses on Natalia Veselitskaya and Rinat Akhmetshin, and not Ike Kaveladze and Rob Goldstone – whom I increasingly suspect stuck around for a second part of the meeting.

If there were two parts to this meeting, then Corallo's statement and NYT interview addressed just one part of it.

But that's not the last thing Corallo did that week, before leaving.

He also released this statement to the AP and others.

Mark Corallo, a spokesman for Trump's legal team, said only, "The President was not aware of and did not attend the meeting."

The guy who left the White House out of concern about obstruction of justice that very same

week, the guy whom Steve Bannon (he who was sure that Trump did meet the meeting attendees) as a firewall in the Russia investigation, denied that Trump had been at the meeting.

The last words Corallo said before leaving out of concerns about obstruction of justice were that Trump did not attend the meeting.