

TRUMP HAS TOLD FRIENDS AND AIDES THAT PAUL MANAFORT CAN INCRIMINATE HIM

This Howard Fineman piece is getting a lot of attention because it reveals that Trump plans to beat Mueller by forcing Jeff Sessions to investigate him and his team.

Sources say that Trump has adopted a two-track strategy to deal with the Mueller investigation.

One is an un-Trumpian passivity and trust. He keeps telling some in his circle that Mueller – any day now – will tell him he is off the hook for any charge of collusion with the Russians or obstruction of justice.

But Trump – who trusts no one, or at least no one for long – has now decided that he must have an alternative strategy that does not involve having Justice Department officials fire Mueller.

“I think he’s been convinced that firing Mueller would not only create a firestorm, it would play right into Mueller’s hands,” said another friend, “because it would give Mueller the moral high ground.”

Instead, as is now becoming plain, the Trump strategy is to discredit the investigation and the FBI without officially removing the leadership. Trump is even talking to friends about the possibility of asking Attorney General Jeff Sessions to consider prosecuting Mueller and his team.

“Here’s how it would work: ‘We’re sorry, Mr. Mueller, you won’t be able to run

the federal grand jury today because he has to go testify to another federal grand jury,'" said one Trump adviser.

But the real eye-popping detail comes much earlier, where multiple sources (one source for this story is the omnipresent Chris Ruddy) anonymously tell Fineman that Trump has taken comfort in the fact that Paul Manafort isn't going to flip on him.

He's decided that a key witness in the Russia probe, Paul Manafort, isn't going to "flip" and sell him out, friends and aides say.

Of course, the suggestion that Manafort *could* get a cooperation deal by flipping on Trump is admission that Manafort – one of the attendees at the June 9 meeting, among other things – could flip on him, that he has proof that Trump was part of the conspiracy with the Russians to tamper in the election.

Never mind that this admission exposes the lie Trump has been telling – that Manafort's indictment only pertains to consulting he did for Ukraine years ago and therefore doesn't pose a risk to Trump. Never mind that Trump's confidence, given the signs that Rick Gates may be prepping to flip, may be premature.

Former Trump campaign aide Rick Gates has quietly added a prominent white-collar attorney, Tom Green, to his defense team, signaling that Gates' approach to his not-guilty plea could be changing behind the scenes.

Green, a well-known Washington defense lawyer, was seen at special counsel Robert Mueller's office twice last week. CNN is told by a source familiar with the matter that Green has joined Gates' team.

Green isn't listed in the court record

as a lawyer in the case and works for a large law firm separate from Gates' primary lawyers.

Green's involvement suggests that there is an ongoing negotiation between the defendant's team and the prosecutors.

[snip]

Superseding indictments, which would add or replace charges against both Gates and Manafort, have been prepared, according to a source close to the investigation. No additional charges have been filed so far. When there is a delay in filing charges after they've been prepared, it can indicate that negotiations of some nature are ongoing.

Most of all, I'm simply amazed at how stupid Trump is to be telling multiple people that Manafort could incriminate him.

I mean, sure, Mueller already knew that. But now he can start asking witnesses – including Steve Bannon, who recently doubled down on his suggestion that Manafort was a traitor, even if that young kid Don Jr is not, and who already has a date scheduled with Mueller's team – whether Trump has told them this himself.