

KUSHNER FLOATS! WAS TRUMP'S WITCH HUNT OUTBURST ABOUT JARED LOSING CLEARANCE?

President Trump had one of his regular tweetbursts this morning about the Mueller investigation, culminating in an all caps tweet WITCH HUNT!



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

WITCH HUNT!

7:49am · 27 Feb 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

These outbursts are admittedly routine. But there was something unusual about this one. As MMFA's Lis Starr noted, the three tweets leading up to this, citing Judge Napolitano, Johnathan Turley, and Ken Starr, were all reruns of Fox coverage from the last several days.

In other words, Trump resorted to the DVR to be able to justify his rant this morning. Clearly, he's even more obsessed today than normal.

That, plus one more detail, makes me wonder whether Trump was reacting to new approaches put in place after Jared (and probably Ivanka) had his clearance downgraded to Secret on Friday.

A memo sent Friday downgraded the presidential son-in-law and adviser and other White House aides who had been working on interim clearances.

Presidential son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner has had his security clearance downgraded – a move that will prevent him from viewing many of the sensitive documents to which he once had unfettered access.

Kushner is not alone. All White House aides working on the highest-level interim clearances – at the Top Secret/SCI-level – were informed in a memo sent Friday that their clearances would be downgraded to the Secret level, according to three people with knowledge of the situation.

The SCI acronym stands for sensitive compartmentalized information, a category of information that comes from sensitive intelligence sources and must be walled off.

The memo was not signed by chief of staff John Kelly, but it comes as the retired Marine general and other top White House aides are grappling with the fallout of a scandal involving former White House staff secretary Rob Porter, which revealed that dozens of White House aides had yet to receive permanent clearances but nonetheless had access to some of the country's deepest secrets.

There are several interesting tidbits about the Politico story reporting that Jared has finally been stripped of his TS/SCI interim clearance. First, John Kelly didn't sign the memo, even though that's who Trump put in charge of over-riding typical clearance process to protect his spawn. If Don McGahn signed it, it might mean Friday's memo came after a follow-up to Robert Mueller's boss, Rod Rosenstein, informing him, back on February 9, of significant new information that required review before he could be cleared.

Also, Politico cites a statement from Abbe Lowell, Jared's defense attorney.

Kushner's attorney Abbe Lowell said in a statement that Kushner "has done more than what is expected of him in this process."

Lowell added that the changes would "not

affect Mr. Kushner's ability to continue to do the very important work he has been assigned by the president."

But the statement is just the same one he used back on February 16, when news of Jared's impending clearance problems first came out. Lowell still has yet to issue any new bravado since he went silent in the face of last week's more serious reports.

Meanwhile, Jared is not staying out of trouble. The Trump 2020 campaign announced that Brad Parscale – one of the people most suspect for coordinating data analysis with the Russians – would run his 2020 re-election campaign. The announcement included this quote from Kushner.

Jared Kushner, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President, and President Trump's son-in-law, said, "Brady was essential in bringing a disciplined technology and data-driven approach to how the 2016 campaign was run. His leadership and expertise will be help [sic] build a best-in-class campaign."

Even aside from the typo, this is a no-no, as it ties Kushner's official White House role to a campaign document.

I almost wonder whether all their fundraising is about paying lawyers at this point. On Friday, CNBC reported that when RNC stopped paying the legal defense of people like Don Jr, it started paying rent at Trump Tower. And the legal defense to pay Trump aides' legal fees also just went active. Increasingly, it seems, the Trump "campaign" is all about staying out of prison.

Meanwhile, the Kushner family's partner on the underwater 666 Fifth Avenue is negotiating to get out.

Kushner Cos. says it's negotiating to buy the 49.5 percent of a debt-laden

office tower on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue that it doesn't already own from partner Vornado Realty Trust.

Christine Taylor, a spokeswoman for Kushner Cos., declined to elaborate on terms for either the purchase or a restructuring of the building's debt. A Vornado representative didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The talks were first reported Tuesday by the Wall Street Journal.

Earlier this month, Vornado recategorized how it accounts for the property, 666 Fifth Ave., because "we do not intend to hold this asset on a long-term basis," it said in an annual report. That language typically means the company plans to unload an asset within a year, a person familiar with Vornado's thinking said at the time.

That's going to shine a lot more light on Kushner's finances, and his efforts to abuse his position as his father-in-law's "peace" negotiator to get bailed out by any number of slimy foreign oligarchs.

Jared's in real trouble. It's a wonder he can stay afloat amid this witch hunt.

Update: Bingo.

Officials in at least four countries have privately discussed ways they can manipulate Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, by taking advantage of his complex business arrangements, financial difficulties and lack of foreign policy experience, according to current and former U.S. officials familiar with intelligence reports on the matter.

Among those nations discussing ways to influence Kushner to their advantage were the United Arab Emirates, China, Israel and Mexico, the current and former officials said.

It is unclear if any of those countries acted on the discussions, but Kushner's contacts with certain foreign government officials have raised concerns inside the White House and are a reason he has been unable to obtain a permanent security clearance, the officials said.

[snip]

White House officials said [National Security Advisor HR] McMaster was taken aback by some of Kushner's foreign contacts.

"When he learned about it, it surprised him," one official said. "He thought that was weird...It was an unusual thing. I don't know that any White House has done it this way before."

Meanwhile, the normally loquacious Abbe Lowell is outsourcing the no-commenting to a spokesperson.

"We will not respond substantively to unnamed sources peddling second-hand hearsay with rank speculation that continue to leak inaccurate information," said Peter Mirijanian, a spokesman for Kushner's lawyer.

Update: Let's look more closely at something loquacious Abbe Lowell had to say the last time he wanted to go on the record about his client, on February 16.

Lowell said Kushner's job is "to talk with foreign officials, which he has done and continues to do properly."

He was denying, 11 days ago, something only now being aired: that Kushner wasn't properly alerting the NSC of his contacts with foreign leaders. But now we know, he wasn't properly alerting the National Security Advisor – the one that replaced the one who lied to the FBI about his contacts with foreigners, I mean.

No wonder Lowell has gone silent.