

ON THE COMEY MEMOS

As you read this thread, remember that whoever leaked the Comey memos is also likely to be one of the people who is calling for Andrew McCabe to be prosecuted for leaking to the media.

January 6, 2017: Trump doesn't deny the golden showers, just that they were prostitutes

Here's the operative passage on Trump's response to being informed about the pee tape.

I said, the Russians allegedly had tapes involving him and prostitutes at the Presidential Suite at the Ritz Carlton in Moscow from about 2013. He interjected, "there were no prostitutes; there were never prostitutes." He then said something about him being the kind of guy who didn't need to "go there" and laughed (which I understood to be communicating that he didn't need to pay for sex). He said "2013" to himself, as if trying to remember that period of time, but didn't add anything. He said he always assumed that hotel rooms he stayed in when he travels are wired in some way. I replied that I do as well.

I said I wasn't saying this was true, only that I wanted him to know both that it had been reported and that the reports were in many hands. I said media like CNN had them and were looking for a news hook. I said it was important that we not give them the excuse to write that the FBI has the material or ██████████ and that we were keeping it very close-held. He said he couldn't believe they hadn't gone with it. I said it was inflammatory stuff that they would get killed for reporting straight up from the source reports.

He then started talking about all the women who had falsely accused him of grabbing or touching them (with particular mention of a "stripper" who said he grabbed her) and gave me the sense that he was defending himself to me. I responded that we were not investigating him and the stuff might be totally made up but it was being said out of Russia and our job was to protect the President from efforts to coerce him. I said we try to understand what the Russians are doing and what they might do. I added that I also wanted him to know this in case it came out in the media.

I think the exchange has been distorted by Comey, who is a prig that would judge anything that reeks of kink.

Trump doesn't actually deny he engaged in some kind of golden showers event. Rather, he denies there were prostitutes. He's only denying he paid for sex. Given the way Trump's associative brain raised what we now know to be hush payments for actual behavior, this seems closer to a confirmation than a denial.

His reference to 2013, while it might be deceit, might also be amazement that the Russians were digging up old dirt.

I'm particularly interested in the redaction, which must say something about the dossier (and possibly Steele's identity, though Comey didn't share it). We don't know who leaked that Trump

got briefed on the memo, and I don't rule out CIA leaking it. But Comey tells Trump that he wants to keep two things secret – that FBI has the dossier and something about the circumstances of the dossier. Those details very quickly leaked. I think it possible – likely even – that Trump leaked these details precisely because Comey said he wanted them kept secret.

January 27, 2017: Trump asks for loyalty, then asks for investigation

While Comey admits that he's not sure he got the order of the private dinner between him and Trump correct, as he lays it out, Trump raises loyalty (to which Comey doesn't respond), then asks Comey to investigate the pee tape to prove it wrong, then asks for loyalty again.

departed for New York by plane that same night. He said he thought maybe he should ask me to investigate the whole thing to prove it was a lie. I did not ask any questions. I replied that it was up to him, but I wouldn't want to create a narrative that we were investigating him, because we are not and I worried such a thing would be misconstrued. I also said that it is very difficult to disprove a lie. He said "maybe you're right," but several times asked me to think about it and said he would also think about it.

I've joked that no one should complain now that an investigation arose out of the dossier since Trump asked for just that, but in context, I think the exchange is even more important. Trump asked for an investigation *from a loyal person*. He expected an investigation that would exonerate him and he tied that to loyalty.

And all *that* took place against the background of Sally Yates warning Don McGahn about what Mike Flynn had said with Sergei Kislyak. In the conversation, Trump introduced a claim that he doubted Flynn's judgment, because he hadn't immediately told Trump that Putin was the first to congratulate Trump on his inauguration (he was among the first to call after the election as well).

ago. Apparently, as the President was toasting PM May, he was explaining that she had been the first to call him after his inauguration and Flynn interrupted to say that ██████ had called (first, apparently). It was then that the President learned of ██████ call and he confronted Flynn about it (not clear whether that was in the moment or after the lunch with PM May). Flynn said the return call was scheduled for Saturday, which prompted a heated reply from the President that six days was not an appropriate period of time to return a call from the ██████ of a country like ██████ ("This isn't ██████ we are talking about."). He said that if he called ██████ and didn't get a return call for six days he would be very upset. In telling the story, the President pointed his fingers at his head and said "the guy has serious judgment issues." I did not comment at any point during this topic and there was no mention or acknowledgment of any FBI interest in or contact with General Flynn.

I've always wondered why Flynn's firing is treated as part of the obstruction investigation, and not part of the conspiracy. I think the explanation lies, at least partly, in this exchange. It's clearly spin. It's not just that Trump was complaining that Flynn wasn't passing on his messages quickly enough, but it's that he's creating the suggestion that Flynn was running Russia response independently, which he wasn't.

That is, Trump's first exchange with Comey after learning Flynn was under investigation was to put some distance between the two of them.

February 8, 2017: At a meet-and-greet with Priebus, Comey meets Flynn and Trump

Comey goes for what he calls a meet-and-greet with Reince Priebus, whom he has said he should primarily work with. But before that happens, Flynn sits down with him for five minutes (remember they would have worked together in 2013-2014), without mentioning the FBI interview.

During the Priebus interview, after an extended discussion about the dossier (remember, Paul Manafort had contacted Priebus weeks earlier to discuss the dossier, and possibly to lay out a rebuttal plan to it), he asks whether there's a FISA order on Flynn.

He then asked me if this was a "private conversation." I replied that it was. He then said he wanted to ask me a question and I could decide whether it was appropriate to answer. He then asked, "Do you have a FISA order on Mike Flynn?" I paused for a few seconds and then said that I would answer here, but that this illustrated the kind of question that had to be asked and answered through established channels. I said the answer [REDACTED] I then explained that the normal channel was from DOJ leadership to the WH counsel about such things. [REDACTED] I would normally make sure the AG and DAG were aware and they would likely inform the WH Counsel and he could decide whether to inform the COS. I explained that it was important that communications about any particular case go through that channel to protect us and to protect the WH from any accusations of improper influence.

Here's analysis suggesting Comey's answer was yes, here's one suggesting it was no. The analysis is made more difficult because Comey uses double spaces after a period.

Contextually, the answer was probably no because:

- Otherwise Comey wouldn't have made an exception to the normal reporting channels
- Ordinarily, it takes a while to get a FISC order; the concern about Flynn intensified on January 5, but in the January 24 interview, FBI Agents generally thought he was being honest
- At this point, FBI was delaying the normal briefing of the counterintelligence investigation because of sensitivity concerns

In any case, though the meeting was supposed to be with Priebus, the Chief of Staff brought Comey into meet with Trump (this feels sort of like another job interview). During it, Trump first raised this remarkably (for him) awkward Putin attempt to protect Trump from the prostitute allegation in the dossier – though like Trump, he's denying that the women were prostitutes, not that he was with women; Trump

claims that Putin said this directly to him, which given Putin's awkwardness could well be the case. Trump then raised Russian pique with Bill O'Reilly for a question about Putin; Comey judges Trump took offense to his distinction between Russian and US killings (though I'm not even sure that's right).

February 14, 2017: Trump emphasizes the Flynn didn't do anything wrong

There are actually three parts to the Flynn content in the famous oval office meeting: a first exchange where Trump defended what Flynn did repeatedly, a second one where Trump complained (rightly) about the leak of the FISA wiretap, and the third exchange about "letting this go."

He began by saying he wanted to "talk about Mike Flynn." He then said that, although Flynn "hadn't done anything wrong" in his call with the Russians (a point he made at least two more times in the conversation), he had to let him go because he misled the Vice President, whom he described as "a good guy." He explained that he just couldn't have Flynn misleading the Vice President and, in any event, he had other concerns about Flynn, and had a great guy coming in, so he had to let Flynn go.

Given the context of the Priebus question about the wiretap less than a week earlier, I actually think that's what the point was. The White House had to get rid of Flynn as an effort to squelch the investigation into actions Trump himself had ordered. But that was only going to work if the FBI did drop the Flynn investigation.

March 1, 2017: Trump calls to check in (and invite Comey to the White House)

This call, which Comey memorialized in an email to Jim Rybicki, seemed designed to get Comey to come of his own accord to the White House. More importantly, the day before Jeff Sessions'

recusal, Trump wanted to get cozy with Comey.

March 30, 2017: Trump asks the cloud be removed

The released memos raise two new details about the “cloud hanging over” phone conversation on March 30. Amid his other comments designed to convince Comey he was innocent, Trump also said he was going to sue Christopher Steele.

Russia). was not involved with hookers in Russia (can you imagine me. hooker a beautiful wife. and it has been very painful). is bringing a personal lawsuit ag Christopher Steele. always advised people to assume they were being recorded

This would have been between the Webzilla and the Alfa Bank suits, and long before Michael Cohen launched his ill-advised (and now dropped) suit. While Trump is a litigious fuck and we can't conclude anything by his threatened suit, it a detail that suggests coordinated lawfare was part of the plan.

In addition, Trump made a reference that made Comey think his “satellite” comment pertained to Sergei Millian. That's interesting given that 1) George Papadopoulos was also under active investigation at this time and 2) Millian had pitched Papadopoulos to pick up the Trump Tower pursuit when Michael Cohen had dropped it in June.

April 11, 2017: Trump reminds Comey we had that thing

Given the way Trump always coupled his requests for loyalty with comments about Andrew McCabe, I wonder whether, when Trump said “we had that thing,” he doesn't believe he made a deal with Comey, where Comey could keep McCabe on so long as Comey remained loyal.

what he would do. He then added, "Because I have been very loyal to you, very loyal, we had that thing, you know."² I did not reply, or ask him what he meant by "that thing."³ Instead I said again that the way to handle it was to have the White

Whatever it was, Comey had no inkling.