

MUELLER FREES UP THE TROLL TEAM

In the background of the celebrating over the Carpenter SCOTUS decision – which held that the government generally needs a warrant to access historical cell phone location – there were a few developments in the Mueller investigation:

- The George Papadopoulos parties moved towards sentencing, either on September 7 or in October. If Mueller told Papadopoulos his wife Simon's Mangiante seeming coordination of the Stefan Halper smear with Sam Clovis (and his lawyer, Victoria Toensing) and Carter Page got him in trouble, we got no sign of that.
- Amy Berman Jackson dismissed a Paul Manafort attempt to limit the criminal penalties of his Foreign Agent Registration Act violations; this isn't very sexy, but if the well-argued opinion stands, it will serve as a precedent in DC for other sleazy influence peddlers.
- After ABJ made sure Rick Gates ask Mueller if he *really* didn't mind Gates going on a trip without his GPS ankle bracelet, Gates got permission to travel –

with the jewelry.

- Kimba Wood accepted Special Master Barbara Jones' recommendations, which among other things held that just 7 of the files reviewed so far pertain to the privilege of anyone, presumably including Trump, to whom Michael Cohen was providing legal services. So Cohen and Trump just paid upwards of \$150,000 to hide the advice Cohen has gotten from lawyers and seven more documents – that is, for no really good reason.
- In two separate filings, four DOJ lawyers filed notices of appearance in the Internet Research Agency/Concord Management case.

It's the latter that I find most interesting.
Mueller has added a team of four lawyers:

- Deborah A. Curtis
- Jonathan Kravis
- Kathryn Rakoczy
- Heather Alpino

To a team with three (plus Michael Dreeben):

- Jeannie Sclafani Rhee
- Rush Atkinson
- Ryan Kao Dickey

Devlin Barrett (he of the likely impressive link map) reported that Mueller did this to prepare

for the moment when his office shuts down and the Concord Management nuisance defense drags on for years.

People familiar with the staffing decision said the new prosecutors are not joining Mueller's team, but rather are being added to the case so that they could someday take responsibility for it when the special counsel ceases operation. The case those prosecutors are joining could drag on for years because the indictment charges a number of Russians who will probably never see the inside of a U.S. courtroom. Russia does not extradite its citizens.

The development suggests Mueller is contemplating the end of his work and farming out any potentially outstanding prosecutions to other parts of the Justice Department.

Except this doesn't make sense. Not only are Concord and the judge, Dabney Friedrich, pushing for a quick trial, but Atkinson and Dickey are themselves DOJ employees, so could manage any residual duties.

Far more likely, Mueller is ensuring one of his A Teams – including Dickey, DOJ's best cyber prosecutor – will be able to move on to more important tasks on the central matters before him.