

FOR FAMILY AND COUNTRY: THE QUESTIONS MICHAEL COHEN WON'T (YET) ANSWER

Yesterday, Michael Cohen continued his public campaign to get an invitation from Robert Mueller to flip on Donald Trump with a(nother) interview with George Stephanopoulos. This interview clearly reflects the coaching of his new attorney, Guy Petrillo.

"Once I understand what charges might be filed against me, if any at all, I will defer to my new counsel, Guy Petrillo, for guidance."

And while Cohen has actually always been complimentary of the FBI agents who raided his home, he has gotten downright effusive about the fact-finding wonders of federal prosecutors, and even condemned the Russian attack.

"I respect the prosecutors. I respect the process," Cohen said. "I would not do or say anything that might be perceived as interfering with their professional review of the evidence and the facts."

[snip]

"I don't like the term witch hunt," he said, adding that he condemned Russia for interfering in the 2016 election.

"As an American, I repudiate Russia's or any other foreign government's attempt to interfere or meddle in our democratic process, and I would call on all Americans to do the same," he said.

The big headline quote comes where he vows to put his family *and country* ahead of Donald Trump's interests (the latter, in my mind, is the more interesting).

"To be crystal clear, my wife, my daughter and my son, and this country have my first loyalty."

I'm most interested, though, in the questions that Petrillo has coached Cohen to remain silent on. Cohen does answer a few questions, asserting Mueller will find he had no improper dealings with Russia and that those who attended the June 9 meetings were idiots for doing so.

Cohen believes Mueller will not find any evidence that he had any illegal or improper dealings with the Russians.

But Cohen did criticize those members of the Trump campaign who participated in that now infamous Trump Tower meeting in June of 2016 with several Russians after being promised dirt on Hillary Clinton.

"I believe it was a mistake by those from the Trump campaign who did participate," he said. "It was simply an example of poor judgment."

But Cohen smartly got quiet when asked about crimes he himself might be accused of.

Prosecutors in New York's Southern District are investigating Cohen for alleged violations of election law and possible financial crimes associated with his personal business dealings.

He has not been charged with any crime. But on the advice of his attorney, Cohen declined to address specific questions about matters currently under investigation.

He won't repeat his earlier answers as to

whether he or Trump decided to pay off Stormy Daniels.

I asked Cohen if the president directed him to make that payment or promised to reimburse him. In the past, Cohen has said that he acted on his own initiative.

Not this time.

“I want to answer. One day I will answer,” he said. “But for now, I can’t comment further on advice of my counsel.”

The big one, though, pertains to whether Cohen knew whether Trump knew about the June 9 Trump Tower meeting before it happened.

When I asked Cohen if President Trump knew about that meeting before it happened, he declined to answer.

“I can’t comment under advice of my counsel due to the ongoing investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Southern District of New York,” Cohen said.

That information – what Trump knew about the June 9 meeting before it happened – is what Cohen is publicly offering up to Mueller’s team in an effort to minimize his own criminal penalties.

Which pretty much confirms that Trump did know about it.