

PETER STRZOK IS A SIDESHOW TO INFORMATION THAT DIRECTLY IMPLICATES THE PRESIDENT

On Thursday, the House Judiciary Committee will hold a public shaming of Peter Strzok, in yet another attempt to prove that the Mueller investigation is hopelessly tainted by Strzok's belief – shared at the time by Republicans Lindsey Graham and Ted Cruz – that Donald Trump is “an opportunist” who is “not fit to be President of the United States” and “Donald Trump can't be trusted with common sense. Why would we trust him in the White House?”

But Strzok and his testimony is, in significant respect, a sideshow to evidence that directly implicates Donald Trump.

I say that based on the following information related to my own interview with the FBI.

- DOJ probably used a clean team with me to ensure it shared nothing it already knew with me
- Peter Strzok had no connection to my interview
- Information I provided would change the importance of evidence otherwise obtained publicly

DOJ probably used a clean team with me

First, as I have suggested, I believe the team that interviewed me was a “clean team,” a

prosecutor and FBI agents who weren't centrally involved in the investigation I provided information on. I say that because the agents came into the interview with almost no information about either me or the person I was discussing.

My interview consisted of three sessions with two breaks. In the first session, the lead agent questioned me aggressively about a detail about the person I was discussing; he didn't believe I had adequately vetted the detail. By the third session, however, he said something that suggested he had since confirmed the detail he had earlier challenged me on. From that I conclude that the FBI already knew of this person, but the agents who interviewed me did not.

I believe they didn't know *about me* because, while the second agent seemed to know I would happily make small talk about cycling in northern Michigan, neither knew how well I know FBI surveillance (for the love of J Edgar Hoover, why would you put agents in a room with me without making that clear?). To be very clear: in the interview, they did not disclose anything I didn't already know. But I did find myself citing information publicly available in the DIOG about the FBI's rules on journalists to them. Given that that issue is one I've reported on more than virtually anyone else, I conclude they simply were unfamiliar with my work.

Peter Strzok had no connection to my interview

This point has gotten muddled, though I have tried to be very meticulous about it. As far as I understand things, I was not interviewed by Mueller's team. Rather, I provided information to the FBI about a subject matter that was not part of the Mueller investigation at the time. One of the prosecutors who was in the loop on,

but did not participate in, my interview was later incorporated into the Mueller team, and public reports say that one of the subject matters was as well.

Thus, whether my interview happened before or after Strzok was removed from Mueller's team (remember I'm deliberately not sharing what date it happened), it doesn't seem possible that he had any upstream or downstream involvement in it. So even if you believe Strzok tainted everything downstream of him, my information was neither up- nor downstream of him. It came into Mueller's possession via a parallel stream.

**Information I provided
may have changed the
importance of other
publicly available
information –
information that
implicates Trump
directly**

I apologize, but I'm going to be deliberately obscure on this point (and will neither confirm nor deny if I'm asked, as it's not something I've run by the Mueller team). As I have said, I don't think I was the first person to provide information on the person I went to the FBI about. I'll add that this person has no discernible tie to Trump or the Republican Party. But I do think I was the first person to provide certain information about him that may have widened the scope of FBI's understanding of the matter.

Subsequent to my interview with the FBI, I realized certain things about publicly available information. I've never shared that realization with the government, but it's a realization they undoubtedly came to on their own from the same

publicly available information.

And that realization I had and the government surely also had would have changed the importance of evidence Mueller received via means unrelated to Peter Strzok.

That evidence likely implicates the President directly.

Let me reiterate: when I went to the FBI, I did not believe this person had a direct tie to Trump or the Republicans at all and I know of none, still. The text about Mike Flynn is the only thing that provably suggested any tie (and that, only in conjunction with the Jared Kushner and Mike Flynn corroboration of it – at the time I received it I thought it was bullshit). Any suspicions I had about a tie between information I had – and understood – when I went into that interview with the FBI and the Trump team would have been speculative and in any case tangential to the central point of what I went to the FBI about.

I believe that when the government had the same realization I had, the scope of their understanding about the person in question would have eventually expanded, though probably not as far as the information I provided may have. Which is to say the information that implicates the President in no way *relies* on my information, though my information would have made the import far more obvious. In any case, none of this comes from me. It's just the evidence that is publicly available.

So tomorrow, as House Judiciary Republicans spend half the day or longer publicly flogging Peter Strzok, know that all that flogging cannot change the fact that key evidence in Mueller's possession, evidence which I suspect implicates the President directly, has absolutely no tie to Peter Strzok at all. None. Tomorrow will be just one big giant show that in no way can alter the provenance of key, damning evidence in Mueller's possession.

The Special Counsel's office declined to comment

for this post.