

DID JARED KUSHNER TRY TO PREEMPTIVELY UNDERCUT MIKE FLYNN AT THE ENQUIRER?



One thing about the Mueller investigation I've gone back and forth on is the degree to which Jared Kushner is in legal trouble. While he left the June 9, 2016 meeting before any agreement to enter a conspiracy might be said to have been reached, his efforts to set up a back channel during the transition period – and the degree to which he appeared to be self-dealing rather than representing the interests of the United States – seemed to expose him to different legal problems.

Then there's the record on Mike Flynn. A key CNN report dated November 30, the day before Flynn flipped, *had* suggested – given the then publicly known events – that Mueller interviewed Jared in advance of Flynn's plea agreement, in what might have been a last ditch effort to allow Jared to exonerate Flynn.

Mueller's team specifically asked Kushner about former national security advisor Michael Flynn, who is under investigation by the special counsel, two sources said. Flynn was the dominant topic of the conversation, one of the sources said.

[snip]

The conversation lasted less than 90 minutes, one person familiar with the

meeting said, adding that Mueller's team asked Kushner to clear up some questions he was asked by lawmakers and details that emerged through media reports. One source said the nature of this conversation was principally to make sure Kushner doesn't have information that exonerates Flynn.

But Flynn's sentencing memo revealed that *he had five proffer meetings* before he signed the agreement.

He participated in five pre-plea proffer sessions with the Special Counsel's Office and fourteen additional meetings with the Government pursuant to the Plea Agreement entered on December 1, 2017.

And, per CNN, Mueller was asking other witnesses about Jared at the time, too.

The meeting took place around the same time the special counsel asked witnesses about Kushner's role in the firing of former FBI Director James Comey and his relationship with Flynn, these people said.

That (plus reports that Flynn cooperated shortly after he was asked) suggests the meeting with Kushner may well have come *after* some of those proffer meetings involving Flynn, which would in turn suggest that Mueller was locking in Jared's testimony with that short interview before revealing that Flynn was cooperating.

Still, Jared is one of the few people involved in this scandal with a very competent defense attorney, and after Abbe Lowell announced that Jared had had a much longer interview with Mueller in April and had gotten a (Trump-demanded) security clearance, I started to believe that Lowell had performed another master stroke as a defense attorney.

Then, in mid-April, Kushner sat for six to seven hours of questions that covered many topics, including his work on the Trump campaign, the transition and in the White House and about Trump's decision in May 2017 to fire Comey.

The special counsel's questioning focused on Kushner's work with Trump and did not include topics such as Kushner's personal finances or those of his family business, Kushner Companies, according to the person familiar with the matter.

Which brings us to this story from the Daily Beast, revealing that Jared (who worked the press assiduously when he owned the Observer) took over Michael Cohen's duties of planting stories in the National Enquirer after Cohen was denied a job in the Administration.

During the early months of the Trump era, Kushner performed the task admirably, discussing with Pecker various issues over the phone, including everything from international relations to media gossip, according to four sources familiar with the situation. Pecker, for his part, bragged to people that he was speaking to the president's son-in-law and, more generally, about the level of access he had to the upper echelons of the West Wing, two sources with knowledge of the relationship recounted.

TDB focuses on Trump's threat to deal dirt on Scarborough and Mika (I had been wondered who had orchestrated that threat) and, rightly, the big propaganda piece that Mohamed bin Salman's unregistered assassination crisis repair agent, Jared, planted.

Starting in late 2016, AMI's priorities shifted from a potential business deal with Kushner to one focused on access to

political power. Shortly after the Trump presidency began, Kushner and Pecker talked repeatedly, on subjects ranging from relations with the Saudi regime, to possible dirt that the *Enquirer* had on *Morning Joe's* Mika Brzezinski and Joe Scarborough, according to the four sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

AMI, like Kushner, cozied up to the despotic Saudi government, which included the production of a glossy propaganda magazine boosting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Last year, Brzezinski and Scarborough, who had increasingly become Trump critics, made the explosive allegation that three senior aides to President Trump "warned" the couple that the *Enquirer* would publish a negative story on them unless they "begged" Trump to intervene on their behalf. The couple's account was disputed by White House officials, who said the conversations were far more cordial than the TV hosts described.

As *The Daily Beast* reported last year, Kushner was one of the senior officials who privately spoke to Scarborough about the matter. According to two White House officials, Scarborough had "calmly sought" advice from Kushner, who "recommended he speak with the president." Scarborough did not know that Kushner had also been directly in touch with the *Enquirer's* publisher at the time, according to a source familiar with the matter.

But I'm just as interested in the spread, from the same period as the Saudi propaganda, seemingly pre-empting a Flynn cooperation agreement with Mueller by attacking him as "the Russian spy in Trump's midst."

The claim that “Trump catches Russia’s White House spy” – clearly an attempt to smear Mike Flynn – actually got me to drop the \$4.99 for a copy of the National Enquirer to read the hit job. And it’s actually more than a contrived effort to claim Flynn is a Russian spy: it’s a four-page spread, implicating Hillary and Mike Pence, too.

[snip]

While the Flynn story has been viewed – particularly alongside unsubstantiated claims that Flynn is cooperating with the FBI – as an attempt to damage him for snitching, it almost certainly dates to earlier than more recent attacks on Flynn, and in conjunction with stories of loyalty oaths from Pence appears tame by comparison.

If he did, the newly cooperative David Pecker has probably already made that clear to authorities.

If Jared – the guy whom Flynn witnessed trying to set up a back channel with Russia – planted a smear attempting to paint Flynn as a Russian infiltrator, it suggests he had reason all the way back in March to try to undercut Flynn. And then, in November, when he had chance to help Flynn out of his legal woes in November, he reportedly did not do so.

It still never pays to bet against the legal skills of Abbe Lowell. Jared is still likely to skate.

But these details sure change my understanding about which collusion egg Mueller cracked first.

As I disclosed in July, I provided information to the FBI on issues related to the Mueller investigation, so I’m going to include disclosure statements on Mueller investigation posts from here on out. I will include the disclosure whether or not the stuff I shared

*with the FBI pertains to the subject of the
post.*