

ROBERT MUELLER FINALLY FOUND A WAY TO GET PAUL MANAFORT TO KEEP A SECRET

Update: Or not. Manafort's lawyers did submit a filing, with all their redactions easily reversed, showing that Manafort lied about his cooperation with his Russian handler Konstantin Kilimnik. I'll do another post on that filing.

On one of the last days of last year, Rudy Giuliani repeated a refrain he made in August, dick-wagging Mueller to "put up or shut up" and release the report that Rudy has spun fables about. That taunt happened ten days after the House Intelligence Committee voted to release Roger Stone's testimony transcript to Mueller. It happened eight days before Paul Manafort failed to submit a filing (at least in unsealed form) explaining whether it contests the government's claims that he lied while purportedly cooperating with the Special Counsel. In between, Sam Patten submitted a status report in his own cooperation agreement – cooperation that would surely have covered some of the same questions about his Russian partner Konstantin Kilimnik that Manafort lied about – under seal.

I raise all these together because – while it's a safe bet that something happened at some point with Manafort that remains under seal – any explanation about what that might be may have as much to do with Mueller's request for Stone's transcripts as it does Manafort's own actions. After all, Adam Schiff has already committed to releasing all the HPSCI transcripts to Mueller; it'll be only a matter of days until he constitutes the committee and has the new Democratic majority on it vote that through. So something has to explain why Mueller couldn't wait – why Mueller needed Stone's transcript on December 20 and not January 10.

Back when he was pretending to cooperate, Manafort did get questions about his lifelong buddy Roger Stone. Mueller put Manafort before the grand jury twice after that, possibly locking in the lies he had told. Notably, however, lies about Stone were not among those Mueller publicly aired (in heavily redacted form) last month. For that matter, neither were any responses Manafort made about Trump's foreknowledge of the June 9 meeting, which we also know came up between Manafort and Mueller.

If I'm right that this is all connected, that still leaves several possibilities. Perhaps Mueller – as Andrew Weissmann suggested they might – charged Manafort for these additional lies or perhaps charged him in the conspiracy-in-chief, finally. Perhaps Manafort made yet another deal with prosecutors, proffering answers to the questions about Stone and Trump they really need him to answer for them, in an attempt to limit his own punishment for that conspiracy in chief.

Whatever it is, it has produced unusual silence from Manafort's camp.

Whatever it is, we may find out in the next month. Sam Patten's status report was extended for just one month. Perhaps we're waiting on SCOTUS' response to the Mystery Appellant's plea. Perhaps we're waiting on the DC Circuit's response to Andrew Miller's challenge.

Until then ... silence.

As I disclosed last 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.