

# **“THAT’S RUDY.” TRUMP PROVES, YET AGAIN, THAT HE WOULD JUST IGNORE A DEFENSIVE BRIEFING**

For years, the frothy right has wailed that candidate Donald Trump should have been given a defensive briefing back in July 2016, rather than have the FBI open an investigation to figure out which member(s) of his campaign had gotten advance notice that the Russians were planning on dropping emails to help Trump win. Never mind that his top advisor in the briefing where that would have occurred was secretly working for the Turkish government at the time.

The complaint has always rung hollow given that, after President Obama warned Trump against hiring Mike Flynn (the aforementioned secret agent for Turkey), Trump went ahead and hired him anyway.

Today, however, we have further proof that Trump would have done nothing if he had gotten a defensive briefing rather than have the FBI investigate whether – as turned out to be true, in every single case – Flynn and Paul Manafort and George Papadopoulos and Carter Page were trying to cash in on their ties to Trump with foreign governments.

Yesterday, the WaPo reported that Trump’s national security advisor warned Trump that Russia was feeding Trump bullshit though Rudy.

U.S. intelligence agencies warned the White House last year that President Trump’s personal lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani was the target of an influence operation by Russian intelligence, according to four former officials familiar with the matter.

The warnings were based on multiple sources, including intercepted communications, that showed Giuliani was interacting with people tied to Russian intelligence during a December 2019 trip to Ukraine, where he was gathering information that he thought would expose corrupt acts by former vice president Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

The intelligence raised concerns that Giuliani was being used to feed Russian misinformation to the president, the former officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information and conversations.

The warnings to the White House, which have not previously been reported, led national security adviser Robert O'Brien to caution Trump in a private conversation that any information Giuliani brought back from Ukraine should be considered contaminated by Russia, one of the former officials said.

The message was, "Do what you want to do, but your friend Rudy has been worked by Russian assets in Ukraine," this person said. Officials wanted "to protect the president from coming out and saying something stupid," particularly since he was facing impeachment over his own efforts to strong-arm Ukraine's president into investigating the Bidens.

But O'Brien emerged from the meeting uncertain whether he had gotten through to the president. Trump had "shrugged his shoulders" at O'Brien's warning, the former official said, and dismissed concern about his lawyer's activities by saying, "That's Rudy."

The WaPo goes on to reveal that Bill Barr and

Pat Cipollone – who helped Trump survive impeachment for *asking* for this help – along with Chris Wray all understood that Rudy was being targeted by Russia.

Several senior administration officials “all had a common understanding” that Giuliani was being targeted by the Russians, said the former official who recounted O’Brien’s intervention. That group included Attorney General William P. Barr, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray and White Counsel Pat Cipollone.

Today, the NYT matched the WaPo story, albeit with one of their fewer than WaPo’s sources pushing back somewhat.

The agencies imparted the warning months before disclosing publicly in August that Moscow was trying to interfere in the election by taking aim at Mr. Biden’s campaign, the officials said. Mr. Trump and Mr. Giuliani have promoted unsubstantiated claims about Mr. Biden that have aligned with Russian disinformation efforts, and Mr. Giuliani has met with a Ukrainian lawmaker whom American officials believe is a Russian agent.

Robert C. O’Brien, the national security adviser, presented the warning about Mr. Giuliani to Mr. Trump in December. Two former officials gave conflicting accounts about its nature. One said the report was presented to Mr. Trump as unverified and vague, but another said the intelligence agencies had developed solid and credible information that Mr. Giuliani was being “worked over” by Russian operatives.

Mr. Trump shrugged it off, officials said, but the first former official cautioned that his reaction could have been colored in part by other

information given to him not long before that appeared to back some of Mr. Giuliani's claims about Ukraine.

Both stories, however, agree that Trump blew off this warning.

So in 2016, the FBI investigated and Trump wailed and cried and said he wished he had gotten a defensive briefing.

Last December, he got a defensive briefing, and he just let his attorney continue to mainline him Russian disinformation.

And along the way, Billy Barr seems to have sidelined a tip (and possibly tried to squelch others) – in the form of the whistleblower complaint that launched impeachment – that might get Rudy investigated for serving as such a willing agent of Russian intelligence.