

RUDY THE DRIPPER: THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF DEAD-ENDER PROPAGANDISTS FEEDING BULLSHIT TO TRIBALIST REPUBLICANS

Not long after the former US Attorney of the Southern District of New York headlined a press conference where he and other lawyers presented insane conspiracy theories to claim that Donald Trump had been robbed of his victory, CNN reported that the FBI continues to investigate Rudy Giuliani for his ties to Russian Agents.

Complicating matters is that Giuliani's post-election swirl of activity comes as federal investigators renewed their investigative interest into his work that is already the subject of a New York-based investigation.

In recent weeks, FBI agents in New York contacted witnesses and asked new questions about Giuliani's efforts in Ukraine and possible connections to Russian intelligence, according to a person briefed on the matter. The FBI investigators, who have spoken to at least one witness previously months ago, came back to ask new questions recently about possible origins of emails and documents related to Hunter Biden that appear similar to those that the New York Post reported that Giuliani and others helped provide. CNN has previously reported that the ongoing probe is examining whether Giuliani is wittingly or unwittingly part of a Russian influence operation, according to people briefed on the matter.

But questions about that probe have been

out of the spotlight as Giuliani stepped into focus as the campaign's chief post-election lawyer. One source close to the Trump campaign countered that Giuliani is an overzealous defender of the president.

Meanwhile, the same propagandists who've helped Trump survive in recent years – on the left and the right – are claiming that because Democrats and others backed the investigation of Russian efforts to get Trump elected in 2016 (an investigation that attempted to understand why Trump fired Jim Comey, the person most Democrats chiefly blame for Hillary's loss), it is precedent for Trump's efforts to disclaim Joe Biden's resounding win.

This exemplifies the vicious cycle we've been on since since August 2016, when Donald Trump authorized his rat-fucker to take desperate measures to find bullshit stories to tell to try to win an election.

After WikiLeaks released the first set of files Russia had stolen as part of its plot to help Trump get elected in July 2016 and someone – it's not clear who – released damning information about Paul Manafort's corrupt ties with Russian-backed Ukrainian oligarchs, Donald Trump doubled down. Rat-fucker Roger Stone, desperate to save Trump's campaign and maybe even the job of his lifetime buddy, made a Faustian bargain for advance access to fairly innocuous John Podesta emails that Stone believed would provide the smoking gun for a conspiracy his allies had been chasing since March. The Faustian deal, by itself, exposed Stone as a co-conspirator in a hack-and-leak operation led by a hostile foreign agency. But the deal also brought ongoing exposure: at least as soon as he was elected, Trump's rat-fucker (and maybe his eldest son!) started pursuing an effort to pay off Julian Assange with a pardon or some other way out of the Ecuadorian Embassy, thereby implicating Trump in a quid pro quo. After Trump assumed the Presidency, his own

exposure through Stone gave him reason to want to shut down the investigation, even the investigation into the hack-and-leak itself. As a result, from very early in his presidency, Trump had obstructed justice to hide the quid pro quo and conspiracy his rat-fucker (and possibly he and his son) had joined to help him get there.

Meanwhile, early on in the investigation, acting on advice that Paul Manafort gave after returning from a meeting with one of Oleg Deripaska's key deputies, the Republicans defended their President by attacking the credibility of the Steele dossier – one that Deripaska himself likely ensured was filled with disinformation – as a stand-in for the larger investigation itself. Deripaska even has apparent sway at one of the outlets that most relentlessly pursued that synecdoche, the dossier as the Russian investigation. Former hawks on Russia, like Trey Gowdy, were lured into fiercely defending Trump even in the face of overwhelming proof of his compromise by the able gate-keeping of Kash Patel and the discovery of how the use of informants can implicate members of your own tribe, as it did with Carter Page. By the time Billy Barr deceived the nation with his roll-out of a very damning Mueller Report, almost every single Republican member of Congress was susceptible to ignoring damning evidence that their President treated both the pursuit of the presidency and his office as a means for self-benefit, no matter what that did to US interests.

Key to the process of co-opting virtually all Republican members of Congress was the process of villainizing the people who had tried to keep the country safe from Russian compromise, starting with Peter Strzok but also including Andy McCabe. That process easily exploited the same apparatus of Congress' "oversight" powers – and the same susceptibility to heated rants over logic – that had been used to turn a tragic incident in Libya into a multi-year investigation of Hillary Clinton. Also key to

that process were certain propagandists on Fox News, including three of the lawyers that stood with Rudy yesterday: DiGenova and Toensing and Sidney Powell.

The day after Mueller closed up shop, those same propagandists joined with Rudy to pursue a revenge plot for the investigation – they started pursuing a way to frame Joe Biden in anticipation of the 2020 election. Most Democrats didn't believe that Hillary lost because of Russia, but Trump and his conspiratorially-minded advisors believed they did. And so Rudy, relying on advice Manafort offered from prison, used the same networks of influence to try to frame Biden in a Ukrainian plot that, at the same time, might provide an alternative explanation for the Russian crimes Trump was personally implicated in.

Once again, Trump got personally involved, extorting the Ukrainian president over a series of months, "I'd like you to do us a favor, though."

There's no doubt that Trump's abuse of Congress' power of the purse in an effort to extort a campaign benefit from a foreign country merited impeachment. There's also no doubt that it served to heighten the tribalism – and ranting illogic – of Republican members of Congress.

Things snowballed further.

That tribalism, by itself, might have gotten Trump re-elected. But it wasn't enough for Trump. Instead, the President prepared an attack on the integrity of the vote by dissuading his own supporters from using mail-in ballots, setting up the Equal Protection hoaxes that Rudy has pushed in recent days. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger claims that, by itself, the effort to discredit mail-in voting cost Trump the state of Georgia. But partisan attacks are what got Trump where he is, and partisan attacks are what he knows.

Trump also doubled down on what had gotten him elected in 2016: overblown attacks sourced to

stolen emails, Hunter Biden's laptop, in this case rolled out by one guy at legal risk for his ties to Fraud Guarantee, and another under indictment for exploiting the tribalism of Trump's supporters to commit fraud. According to CNN, the FBI believes these emails may have been packaged up by the Russian agents that have been buying access through Rudy and DiGenova and Toensing.

Trump's DOJ, working with Sidney Powell, even tried to invent an attack on Joe Biden by altering exhibits in a court proceeding. In that case, the overblown attack was sourced to real notes, albeit notes that actual law enforcement officials had packaged in such a way as to tell a false story. Yet again, however, this was a false story that scapegoated those who've protected the interests of the country – adding Joe Biden to the targets along with McCabe and Strzok – to try to cover-up unbelievably damning evidence about Trump's coziness with Russia. The effort to deny that Mike Flynn was secretly working for Turkey while claiming to work for Trump and to deny that Mike Flynn repeatedly called up the country that had just attacked us to try to obtain further benefits turned into an attack on those who tried to keep the country safe from sell-outs like Mike Flynn.

It's a false story. But Republicans in Congress believe it with all their being. And so it has succeeded in convincing those Republicans they need to redouble their efforts to defend Trump.

So, yesterday, Rudy and the other propagandists gave a press conference that was, for the first time, broadly labeled as a coup attempt and roundly mocked, even by otherwise true believers. Trump, Rudy, Republicans, they're all victims of an international plot launched by George Soros, Cuba, China, Venezuela, according to Rudy and the lawyers who spun the last several conspiracy theories on Fox News.

And this propaganda, an attempt to set aside the clear will of the voters, derives its strength not from any basis in fact. Rather, it derives

its power from the fact that Republicans have gotten so tribally defensive of Trump, they will set aside the clear good of the country to back him.

Donald Trump, if he leaves office, may face legal consequences for what he did in 2016 to get elected. If Trump leaves office, Rudy may face consequences for the things he has done since to keep Trump in office.

To save themselves, they're pursuing the same strategy they've pursued since 2016: telling bullshit stories by waving documents around and lying about what they say, relying on tribalism and raw power rather than reason to persuade their fellow Republicans. It just so happens that several of these stories got told with the help of Russian foreign agents (though some got told with the help of a corrupted law enforcement). It just so happens that Trump and Rudy (and Stone's) willingness to rely on Russian help to tell these stories has greatly exacerbated their legal risk, and therefore made the spewing of bullshit stories more urgent.

But the Russian role mostly serves to magnify the desperation of this gambit.

Mostly, this is about weaponizing the tribalism of the Republican party that puts party loyalty over loyalty to the country or Constitution. And while there have been a few defectors from this dangerous tribalism in recent days, for the most part, Republicans in Congress don't care that Trump is exploiting them like this or even – in some cases – don't understand that this is all a shoddy set of lies.