

JULIAN ASSANGE OFFICIALLY ASKS TRUMP TO PARDON HIM FOR HELPING HIM GET ELECTED

As I have noted, there's abundant evidence that Robert Mueller investigated pardon discussions between Julian Assange and Roger Stone; that investigation appeared to be ongoing at least as of October 2020. That *should* make any Trump pardon of Julian Assange at least as legally fraught as any of the others he has given or is expected to give, short of a self-pardon.

Predictably, Ken Vogel makes no mention of that in his story on two parallel efforts to obtain a pardon for Assange. Nor does Vogel note that the petition submitted by Assange's US defense attorney, Barry Pollack, includes what would be that quid pro quo in the requested scope of the pardon.

Mr. Assange should be granted a pardon to cover the conduct at issue in the pending criminal case against him and any other conduct prior to the pardon grant that could be the basis for criminal charges against him in the United States.

If Trump gave Assange a pardon with this scope, the language would amount to a pardon for helping Trump get elected, a pardon under discussion within days of Trump's 2016 victory if not even before it. This would amount to a more generous pardon than Trump gave his own rat-fucker, Roger Stone.

Along with a misrepresentation of what the *current* CFAA charge against Assange is and a claim that Assange, "has already been confined longer than any person ever charged or convicted

under the Espionage Act in its more than 100-year history” (effectively counting time Assange chose to hide out in the Ecuadorian Embassy while still engaged in similar acts to those he’s being prosecuted for), Pollack presents a really hysterical subset of the files Assange leaked in 2016 and 2017:

In 2016, WikiLeaks published:

- *19,252 e-mails and 8,034 attachments from the Democratic National Party leadership, which resulted in the resignation of five top officials who had taken actions during the primaries in favor of Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders.*

In 2017, WikiLeaks:

- *exposed lax security in the CIA unit dedicated to malware development, a fact acknowledged by an internal CIA report into the publication, which was subsequently revealed by Senator Ron Wyden; and*
- *published the “the Russia Spy files,” documents relating to Russia under Vladimir Putin, including releases about surveillance*

contractors in Russia.

Pollack leaves off, among other things, the Podesta files involved in the seeming quid pro quo (which I guess might otherwise make him party to the crime). And he includes the Russian files for the same reason WikiLeaks published the already published files – as propaganda to cover up his role as a cut-out for Russia. The Vault 7 release, of course, happened during the period when – Pollack claims – Assange was “confined” as if it had anything to do with Espionage charges.

The real focus of the Vogel story, however, is how – in the wake of Trump’s coup this week – a bunch of Australian buddies of Assange just signed a “pro bono” contract with a lobbyist to push for the pardon.

Mr. Davis, who is now a lawyer specializing in national security and whistle-blower cases, is on the board of Blueprint for Free Speech, an Australia-based nonprofit group that advocates for press freedoms and whistle-blower protections. The group, which was started by Suelette Dreyfus, a former journalist who is an old friend and collaborator with Mr. Assange, signed a pro bono contract on Saturday with the lobbyist Robert Stryk to seek a pardon for Mr. Assange.

During Mr. Trump’s presidency, Mr. Stryk, who is well connected in Trump administration circles, has developed a lucrative business representing foreign clients in precarious geopolitical situations.

He has worked for a jailed Saudi prince who had fallen out of favor with his country’s powerful de facto leader, as well as the administration of President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela, which the Trump administration considers

illegitimate. Mr. Styrk also worked for Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of Angola's former president, who is accused of embezzling millions of dollars from a state oil company she once headed, as well as the government of the former Congolese president Joseph Kabila, which had faced American sanctions for human rights abuses and corruption.

Disclosure: my travel expenses were paid to speak at events in Australia in 2017 by Dreyfus' organization.

Again, I'm perfectly happy with the decision that our prisons are too inhumane for Assange. Pollack is a superb lawyer and Assange is certainly entitled to a vigorous defense (the first real hint of which shows up in the petition). But this whole effort is yet more of a propaganda campaign hiding what Assange has become and the role Assange had in electing the guy who just attempted a coup to stay in power. That does not serve journalism, though it may give Trump enough cover to pay off his 2016 campaign dues to Russia.