

COMPROMISE: SALLY YATES' WARNING ABOUT VULNERABILITY TO BLACKMAIL APPLIED TO TRUMP EVEN MORE THAN MIKE FLYNN

Given the news that the FBI opened a Counterintelligence investigation into Trump in the week after he fired Jim Comey on May 9, 2017 (CNN's account is actually far more useful than NYT's), I want to look at part of what Sally Yates testified – the day before Trump fired Jim Comey – that she told Don McGahn when she let him know that Mike Flynn had lied to the public and the FBI about what he said to Sergei Kislyak on December 29, 2016.

Effectively, Yates laid out how, because the Russians would have known that Flynn had lied, it would be easy to blackmail him.

[W]e were concerned that the American people had been misled about the underlying conduct and what General Flynn had done, and additionally, that we weren't the only ones that knew all of this, that the Russians also knew about what General Flynn had done.

And the Russians also knew that General Flynn had misled the vice president and others, because in the media accounts, it was clear from the vice president and others that they were repeating what General Flynn had told them, and that this was a problem because not only did we believe that the Russians knew this, but that they likely had proof of this information.

And that created a compromise situation, a situation where the national security

adviser essentially could be blackmailed by the Russians. Finally, we told them that we were giving them all of this information so that they could take action, the action that they deemed appropriate.

At the time she delivered these comments to McGahn in January 2017, Yates would have known only that Flynn had lied.

Even at the time she testified about the exchange with McGahn in May, neither she nor the FBI would yet have had tangible evidence that Flynn had been acting on Trump's orders when he told Kislyak to hold off on responding to sanctions. Likewise, neither she nor the FBI knew at the time that Trump's spawn had, the summer before, agreed to consider lifting sanctions if his dad got elected. Neither Yates nor the FBI would have known that the Russians were offering a Trump Tower deal and dirt on Hillary Clinton to induce Don Jr to commit to revisit sanctions. And, neither Yates nor the FBI would have known that Don McGahn had written up a misleading report justifying the firing of Mike Flynn (who, after all, had only done what he had been ordered), that directly conflicted with Yates' account of the conversation.

For all those reasons, Yates would not have known that this theory – that covering up the Tower-for-sanctions quid pro quo, the commitment to deliver on sanctions relief, and the bogus reason for firing Mike Flynn made a person susceptible to blackmail – actually applied to Trump, not (just) Flynn. Indeed, for a variety of reasons Trump was more susceptible to blackmail than Flynn, because Flynn had just been doing what he was told, didn't have a prior bribe to hide, and might expect a pardon if he successfully protected the President.

Indeed, Yates would not know how, from the moment David Ignatius revealed that the FBI had discovered the transcripts of Flynn's conversations with Sergei Kislyak, the Russians

would have had Trump by the nuts. All the more so given that the FBI also had a transcript of Kislyak explicitly informing Flynn that Putin had based his response to Obama's sanctions on December 30, 2016 on Flynn's assurances about sanctions. Putin, that old KGB hand, made sure there was a record of the Russians making it clear that their response was entirely premised on whatever promises Flynn had made (at Trump's direction).

From the moment the Russians learned the FBI had found those transcripts, Trump would have had to prevent the FBI from discovering that he had ordered Flynn to make those comments, and had ordered him to do so to pay off his election debt.

From that moment forward, Trump would be stuck committing one after another act of obstruction in an attempt to prevent the FBI from discovering the full truth. Each of those acts would put him deeper in the hole, because each time he engaged in obstruction, the Russians would measure his increasing vulnerability.

Almost a month before he took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, Donald Trump clandestinely took an action to undercut the official policy of America's President. From that moment forward, he had as much at stake as the Russians in thwarting the investigation into the election year operation.

And Putin has capitalized on that compromise ever since.

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.