

# ON THE MANAFORT RAID

This morning, the WaPo reported that Paul Manafort's Alexandria home was searched in a pre-dawn raid on July 26.

There are several notable details about WaPo's report.

First, as Julian Sanchez notes, it makes no mention of the fact that to get a search warrant, you have to convince a judge you'll find evidence of a crime.

Note, too, that WaPo talked to someone who has seen the warrant, which is almost certainly otherwise still sealed.

The search warrant was wide-ranging and FBI agents working with special counsel Robert S. Mueller III departed the home with various records.

[snip]

The search warrant indicates investigators may have argued to a federal judge they had reason to believe Manafort could not be trusted to turn over all records in response to a grand jury subpoena.

Having neglected to mention the probable cause bit and reviewed the warrant, WaPo goes to some lengths to suggest the seized documents are ones Manafort would have gladly given over had Robert Mueller's inquiry just asked nicely.

The raid came as Manafort has been voluntarily producing documents to congressional committees investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election.

[snip]

The documents included materials Manafort had already provided to Congress, said people familiar with the

search.

“If the FBI wanted the documents, they could just ask [Manafort] and he would have turned them over,” said one adviser close to the White House.

And it specifically points to documents pertaining to the June 9, 2016 meeting that Manafort and everyone else failed to disclose in timely fashion.

Manafort has provided documents to both the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate and House intelligence committees. The documents are said to include notes Manafort took while attending a meeting with Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer at Trump Tower in June 2016.

So the seized documents include documents Manafort turned over willingly, which in turn includes details on that June 9 meeting. But that doesn't mean (contrary to some shitty derivative reporting on this) that the set of documents seized matches the set of documents provided to Congress. It may also include other things.

Manafort's attorney is not the source for the story, but Manafort's allies may be.

Josh Stueve, spokesman for Mueller, declined to comment, as did Reginald Brown, an attorney for Manafort.

[snip]

Manafort's allies fear that Mueller hopes to build a case against Manafort unrelated to the 2016 campaign, in hopes that the former campaign operative would provide information against others in Trump's inner circle in exchange for lessening his own legal exposure.

Now consider a detail included in the NYT version of this story but not (as far as I've seen) in any of the other coverage: the documents seized include tax documents and foreign banking records.

Investigators for the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, recently searched a home of President Trump's former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, for tax documents and foreign banking records, according to a person briefed on the matter.

These are money laundering documents, not campaign documents.

The NYT, curiously, doesn't report where the raid was, which suggests it was not just a response to WaPo's reporting, which clearly identified the raid as taking place in Alexandria.

Remember: when high powered people are being investigated, the safest way they can communicate to each other is via leaks to the press. Moreover, such leaks can help spin the story away from one area (perhaps, here, away from the financial documents) and towards another (that June 9 meeting about which Manafort spoke with Congress). Given the Manafort allies' spin that Mueller may be investigating stuff unrelated to the election campaign, it suggests this may be as much about money laundering (which FBI has been investigating for over a year) that all involved worry will be used to flip Manafort to testify about Trump.

Update: One other interesting question about this story is why it is coming out now. Why did it take two weeks for this story to come out?