

# IN BID TO HELP TRUMP, JOHN DOWD SUGGESTS MANAFORT RAID COULD DO REAL DAMAGE TO THE PRESIDENT

This Bloomberg piece suggesting, improbably, Trump's legal team will some day catch up to match the quality of Robert Mueller's team, describes Trump's lawyers – especially John Dowd – coordinating with lawyers for other witnesses in the inquiry, including those of Paul Manafort and Mike Flynn.

For the moment, Trump's personal lawyers are focused on coordinating with lawyers for the Trump campaign and the Trump Organization, as well as for individuals involved in the investigation such as Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn. Dowd also spends time communicating with Mueller—the two have known each other for years, says the person familiar with Trump's legal strategy.

It also confirms that Dowd has been chatting regularly with Mueller, though doesn't reveal – as the USA Today did – that those chats include passing on messages from the President.

"He appreciates what Bob Mueller is doing," Trump's chief counsel John Dowd told USA TODAY in an interview Tuesday. "He asked me to share that with him and that's what I've done."

Trump's legal team has been in contact with Mueller's office, and Dowd says he has passed along the president's messages expressing "appreciation and greetings" to the special counsel.

"The president has sent messages back

and forth,’’ Dowd said, declining to elaborate further.

All of which is useful background for this Fox News piece, which quotes from a letter Dowd sent to a WSJ reporter, complaining about the raid on Paul Manafort. Dowd’s chief concern is that Mueller allegedly didn’t exhaust other methods to obtain the materials seized in the raid.

The email reflects Trump’s legal team moving to protect the president, amid speculation that the raid could be part of a broader effort to squeeze Manafort for information on Trump.

Dowd, in his note, questioned the validity of the search warrant itself, calling it an “extraordinary invasion of privacy.” Dowd said Manafort already was looking to cooperate with congressional committees and said the special counsel never requested the materials from Manafort.

“These failures by Special Counsel to exhaust less intrusive methods is a fatal flaw in the warrant process and would call for a Motion to Suppress the fruits of the search,” Dowd wrote, arguing the required “necessity” of the warrant was “misrepresented to the Court which raises a host of issues involving the accuracy of the warrant application and the supporting FBI affidavit.”

Even assuming what Dowd claims is true (though given the reports that FBI seized financial records not known to have been requested by Congress, that’s doubtful), what does it say that Dowd knows so much about this raid and Manafort’s efforts to comply with all requests? What does it say that Fox presents Dowd’s email as “Trump’s legal team moving to protect the president”?

What is it about an investigation into

Manafort's corruption – and, yes, that June 9, 2016 meeting that Manafort attended, about which Trump dictated a response making false claims – that personally damages the President? I mean, sure, it is Fox claiming Dowd's complaints protect Trump, not Dowd. But the panicked response here seems to hurt Trump, not help him. (And if you haven't already, read Rayne's point about Trump's mid-twitter rant pause.)

But I am interested in this tidbit, claiming that the FBI seized materials Manafort was using to cooperate with Congressional investigators (and his testimony the day before and day of the raid.

Dowd also said agents seized "privileged and confidential materials prepared for Mr. Manafort by his counsel to aid him in his cooperation with the Congressional committees,"

This might explain the raid, as well as reporting from numerous outlets that suggested a connection with Manafort's testimony to Congress. Manafort had materials that were timely, useful for the day before and day after, but which he might (rightly?) claim attorney-client privilege over were Mueller to subpoena them. Did staffers see something sketchy on July 25 and alert Mueller?

I actually *am* somewhat interested if this raid was used to get Manafort's notes used to testify to Congress.

But given John Dowd's panic in response – and all the reporting that he has consulted with Manafort's lawyers – I'm really curious whether it is Dowd's advice that Mueller was most interested in seeing.

Update: Just so it's here, I wanted to show what happened with Manafort's testimony on Tuesday, July 25. He had been asked to testify at a hearing that kept getting rescheduled (as much because of Fusion GPS CEO Glenn Simpson's reluctance to testify as Manafort's). On Monday,

July 24 (“last night” in a July 25 release), Grassley and Feinstein issued a subpoena for Manafort in particular complaining that Manafort wanted to appear before just one committee.

While we were willing to accommodate Mr. Manafort’s request to cooperate with the committee’s investigation without appearing at Wednesday’s hearing, we were unable to reach an agreement for a voluntary transcribed interview with the Judiciary Committee. Mr. Manafort, through his attorney, said that he would be willing to provide only a single transcribed interview to Congress, which would not be available to the Judiciary Committee members or staff. While the Judiciary Committee was willing to cooperate on equal terms with any other committee to accommodate Mr. Manafort’s request, ultimately that was not possible. Therefore, yesterday evening, a subpoena was issued to compel Mr. Manafort’s participation in Wednesday’s hearing. As with other witnesses, we may be willing to excuse him from Wednesday’s hearing if he would be willing to agree to production of documents and a transcribed interview, with the understanding that the interview would not constitute a waiver of his rights or prejudice the committee’s right to compel his testimony in the future.

Later on Tuesday, Grassley and Feinstein announced that Manafort would cooperate, and started turning over documents.

Faced with issuance of a subpoena, we are happy that Mr. Manafort has started producing documents to the Committee and we have agreed to continue negotiating over a transcribed interview. It’s important that he and other witnesses continue to work with this committee as it fulfills its oversight

responsibility. Our investigation is still in its early stages, and we will continue to seek information from witnesses as necessary. As we've said before, we intend to get the answers that we need, one way or the other. Cooperation from witnesses is always the preferred route, but this agreement does not prejudice the committee's right to compel his testimony in the future.

This is the reluctant, last minute "cooperation" that Dowd is now pointing to as basis for his claim that Mueller could have gotten Manafort's cooperation via other means.