

# DID MANAFORT PREP TRUMP FOR THE DOSSIER LAWFARE

In the wake of the report that Marc Elias paid for the Steele dossier on behalf of the Democratic party, Ken Vogel linked back to an old story of his, reporting that the day after the Steele dossier came out, Manafort had a conversation with Reince Priebus about it.

It was about a week before Trump's inauguration, and Manafort wanted to brief Trump's team on alleged inaccuracies in a recently released dossier of memos written by a former British spy for Trump's opponents that alleged compromising ties among Russia, Trump and Trump's associates, including Manafort.

"On the day that the dossier came out in the press, Paul called Reince, as a responsible ally of the president would do, and said this story about me is garbage, and a bunch of the other stuff in there seems implausible," said a person close to Manafort.

[snip]

According to a GOP operative familiar with Manafort's conversation with Priebus, Manafort suggested the errors in the dossier discredited it, as well as the FBI investigation, since the bureau had reached a tentative (but later aborted) agreement to pay the former British spy to continue his research and had briefed both Trump and then-President Barack Obama on the dossier.

Manafort told Priebus that the dossier was tainted by inaccuracies and by the motivations of the people who initiated

it, whom he alleged were Democratic activists and donors working in cahoots with Ukrainian government officials, according to the operative.

I think Vogel retweeted it because the story laid out much of what came next.

But I'm interested in it for several other reasons. First, where did Manafort learn of this? Did he learn of it from the Russians tied to the death, just a few weeks earlier, of one of the suspected sources of the dossier? If so, does Mueller have transcripts of those conversations?

And how broadly were Manafort's comments shared in the White House? Did Brian Benczkowski, then running the transition team at DOJ, but not long later, advising Alfa Bank to sue BuzzFeed over it, learn of Manafort's comments?

I've never been surprised *that* both Russians and Republicans were engaging in lawfare to expose the underlying circumstances of the dossier's existence. I've just been amazed at how well coordinated that lawfare was. I mean, sure, it didn't take much to understand that's where this was going. But did Manafort serve as a go-between here, to make the lawfare more effective?

And if so, did Priebus tell Mueller about it in his interview?