

A MONTH AND A HALF BEFORE THE JUNE 9 MEETING, TRUMP CAMPAIGN LEARNED ABOUT HACKED EMAILS

In response to yesterday's server hiccups and in anticipation that Mueller is nowhere near done, we expanded our server capacity overnight. If you think you'll rely on emptywheel reporting on the Mueller probe, please consider a donation to support the site.

As I laid out here, the indictment against Paul Manafort is meant to embarrass him, but still pave the way for him to flip. That's the carrot, if an indictment stripping the money laundered suits off Manafort's back can be said to be good news.

The bad news is this guilty plea, for false statements, by campaign advisor George Papadopoulos, signed on October 5, but only unsealed today. That plea makes it clear that 1) the campaign had, as an explicit goal, making friends with Russia 2) a month and a half before the June 9 Trump Tower meeting, Russian handlers dangled the stolen Hillary emails 3) Papadopoulos has cooperated beyond what has been laid out in the guilty plea.

As the plea lays out, Papadopoulos learned in early March he'd be a foreign policy advisor to the Trump campaign. Within weeks, a professor fresh off a trip to Moscow started cultivating him, and introduced him to a woman pretending to be Vladimir Putin's niece. After meeting that handler, Papadopoulos attended a meeting with Trump and others where he explained "he had connections that could help arrange a meeting between then-candidate Trump and President Putin." The plea makes clear that Papadopoulos kept the campaign in the loop on his "outreach

to Russia.”

And it makes it clear that on April 26 – three days before the DNC figured out Russia had hacked them – Papadopoulos’ handler told him Moscow had dirt on Clinton.

The Professor told defendant PAPADOPOULOS that on that trip he (the Professor) learned that the Russians had obtained “dirt” on then-candidate Clinton. The Professor told defendant PAPADOPOULOS, as PAPADOPOULOS later described to the FBI, that “They [the Russians] have dirt on her”; “the Russians had emails of Clinton”; “they have thousands of emails.”

After learning the Russians had emails on Clinton even before Clinton learned it, Papadopoulos “continued to correspond with Campaign officials,” including his Senior Policy Advisor and a High-Ranking Campaign Official. (One of these may be Manafort; another almost certainly is Jeff Sessions.)

In response, the campaign decided to send someone low level “so as not to send any signal.”

It turns out, Papadopoulos lied about some of this the first time he spoke with the FBI about it on January 27. For example, he claimed he learned about the emails before he joined the campaign, trying to pretend that he didn’t learn about them only *because* he had just been named a top advisor.

Papadopoulos must be a fucking idiot, because a number of his communications with his Russian handlers were on Skype, a PRISM provider. Though he tried to stop using his communications immediately after his second FBI interview, which is a bit too late.

My favorite part of the plea is the last paragraph:

On July 27, 2017, defendant PAPADOPOULOS was arrested upon his arrival at Dulles International Airport. Following his arrest, defendant PAPADOPOULOS met with the Government on numerous occasions to provide information and answer questions.

I'm betting the FBI asked him about this detail, from a March 31 meeting.

On or about March 31, 2016, defendant PAPADOPOULOS attended a "national security meeting" in Washington, D.C., with then-candidate Trump and other foreign policy advisors for the Campaign. When defendant PAPADOPOULOS introduced himself to the group, he stated, in sum and substance, that he had connections that could help arrange a meeting between then-candidate Trump and President Putin.

Here's what that meeting looked like:



You'll note that Attorney General Jeff Sessions was at the meeting as well. Just last week Jeff Sessions claimed to know nothing about collusion.

I'm guessing this plea is going to make flipped far more attractive to Paul Manafort. Because Manafort now knows that the government knows that the campaign knew about Hillary's emails well before that June 9, 2016 meeting.