

BANNON AIMS TO BEST JARED KUSHNER'S BIGGEST MISTAKE IN MODERN POLITICAL HISTORY

Back in September, Steve Bannon agreed on 60 Minutes that firing Jim Comey was the stupidest decision in modern political history.

In a "60 Minutes" interview that was posted online Sunday night, Bannon was asked whether he considered Comey's dismissal – which ignited a political firestorm and directly led to the appointment of a special counsel to investigate Russian meddling in the 2016 election, including potential ties to Trump's campaign – the biggest mistake in political history.

Bannon responded, "That would be probably – that probably would be too bombastic even for me, but maybe modern political history.

"He went on to acknowledge that if Comey had not been let go, it's unlikely that the probe led by special counsel Robert Mueller would have been established.

"I don't think there's any doubt that if James Comey had not been fired, we would not have a special counsel, yes," he said. "We would not have the Mueller investigation. We would not have the Mueller investigation and the breadth that clearly Mr. Mueller is going for."

At that time, Bannon insisted that he faced no risk from even the expanded Mueller investigation, and hadn't even lawyered up.

All that changed, of course, after he ran his

mouth to Michael Wolff. Bannon claimed to be offended by the June 9, 2016 Trump Tower meeting. In his apology he would even say the entire meeting offended his life's work making movies about fighting "the evil empire."

"My comments about the meeting with Russian nationals came from my life experiences as a Naval officer stationed aboard a destroyer whose main mission was to hunt Soviet submarines to my time at the Pentagon during the Reagan years when our focus was the defeat of 'the evil empire' and to making films about Reagan's war against the Soviets and Hillary Clinton's involvement in selling uranium to them."

But what really irked Bannon is that when Don Jr, Paul Manafort, and Jared Kushner met with Russians in an effort to obtain dirt on Hillary Clinton, they didn't use lawyers as cutouts.

"The chance that Don Jr. did not walk these jomos up to his father's office on the twenty-sixth floor is zero," said an astonished and derisive Bannon, not long after the meeting was revealed.

"The three senior guys in the campaign," an incredulous Bannon went on, "thought it was a good idea to meet with a foreign government inside Trump Tower in the conference room on the twenty-fifth floor—with no lawyers. They didn't have any lawyers. Even if you thought that this was not treasonous, or unpatriotic, or bad shit, and I happen to think it's all of that, you should have called the FBI immediately. Even if you didn't think to do that, and you're totally amoral, and you wanted that information, you do it in a Holiday Inn in Manchester, New Hampshire, with your lawyers who meet with these people and go through everything and then they verbally come and tell another lawyer in

a cut-out, and if you've got something, then you figure out how to dump it down to Breitbart or something like that, or maybe some other more legitimate publication. You never see it, you never know it, because you don't need to. . . . But that's the brain trust that they had."

On Monday, the home, hotel, and office of the lawyer Trump has long used as such a cutout, Michael Cohen, got raided. Among the things the FBI sought – in addition to information on Cohen's own corrupt business – were communications Trump and that lawyer *and others* had about the Access Hollywood video.

FBI agents who raided the home, office and hotel of Donald Trump's personal lawyer sought communications that Trump had with attorney Michael Cohen and others regarding the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape that captured Trump making lewd remarks about women a month before the election, according to sources familiar with the matter.

[snip]

The search warrant also sought communications between then-candidate Trump and his associates regarding efforts to prevent disclosure of the tape, according to one of the sources. In addition, investigators wanted records and communications concerning other potential negative information about the candidate that the campaign would have wanted to contain ahead of the election. The source said the warrant was not specific about what this additional information would be. [my emphasis]

Bannon – and Marc Kasowitz, who sent a lawyer to meet with Trump in the wake of news of the raid

– was probably among those associates. After all, Bannon also told Wolff that he and Kasowitz had to deal with a number of “near-death problems on the campaign” pertaining to women – like Stormy Daniels and Karen McDougal – making legal threats against Trump.

Unable to hire prestige talent, Bannon turned to one of the president’s longtime hit-man lawyers, Marc Kasowitz. Bannon had previously bonded with Kasowitz when the attorney had handled a series of near-death problems on the campaign, including dealing with a vast number of allegations and legal threats from an ever growing list of women accusing Trump of molesting and harassing them.

Now, Steve Bannon, the guy who claimed firing Jim Comey was the stupidest recent political decision, the guy who wasn’t so much opposed to political rat-fucking as he was opposed to doing it without using lawyers as a cutout, is shopping a new plan to get Trump out of his legal woes: fire Rod Rosenstein.

Stephen K. Bannon, who was ousted as White House chief strategist last summer but has remained in touch with some members of President Trump’s circle, is pitching a plan to West Wing aides and congressional allies to cripple the federal probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election, according to four people familiar with the discussions.

The first step, these people say, would be for Trump to fire Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, who oversees the work of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III and in recent days signed off on a search warrant of Trump’s longtime personal lawyer, Michael Cohen.

Bannon also wants to fire Ty Cobb, one of

Trump's remaining semi-legit lawyers, as part of an effort to invalidate all the testimony from White House officials – including himself!!!! – based on the claim it should have been covered by executive privilege.

And he is telling associates inside and outside the administration that the president should create a new legal battleground to protect himself from the investigation by asserting executive privilege – and arguing that Mueller's interviews with White House officials over the past year should now be null and void.

"The president wasn't fully briefed by his lawyers on the implications" of not invoking executive privilege, Bannon told The Washington Post in an interview Wednesday. "It was a strategic mistake to turn over everything without due process, and executive privilege should be exerted immediately and retroactively."

[snip]

Bannon believes Trump can argue he was given poor counsel by his lawyers on Russia, including Ty Cobb, who has encouraged a cooperative approach to Mueller's team.

"Ty Cobb should be fired immediately," Bannon said.

I'm agnostic about whether the Access Hollywood video actually relates to the Russian investigation. If it does, the only conceivable reason to refer it to Southern District of NY would be to establish a clean team – but Mueller's team has already handled interactions with investigations involving two lawyers and/or legal teams, Melissa Laurenza (who testified that Manafort led her to lie on FARA forms), and Skadden Arps. I do think it possible – highly likely, actually – that Cohen may have been used

as a cutout in some hotel room in New England to cover-up other sensitive issues.

But given Bannon's response, the investigation into Cohen's cover-up of Trump's problems with women – including both the Access Hollywood tape and the legal negotiations with Daniels and McDougal – probably implicates Bannon as well as Cohen.

And so Bannon wants to do what Kushner did when he, similarly, realized how much a legal investigation jeopardized him personally: fire the guy running the investigation.

Indeed, Bannon seems so panicked he can't even remember that such moves rank among the stupidest in modern political history.

Update: One more thing about the Stormy/McDougal/Access investigation. That may come directly out of Bannon's own testimony, which would explain why he'd want to try to invalidate it.