

ROGER STONE, RICK GATES, AND MICHAEL CAPUTO MET RIGHT AROUND DNC/PODESTA HACK

Michael Caputo, a former Trump communications official with close ties to Russia who was mentored by Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, was interviewed by Mueller's team last week. He described how the Mueller team knows more about the Trump campaign than he does, and that they are precisely accurate in targeting what they're looking for.

"It's clear they are still really focused on Russia collusion," Caputo said, adding, "They know more about the Trump campaign than anyone who ever worked there."

[snip]

"The Senate and the House are net fishing," Caputo said. "The special counsel is spearfishing. They know what they are aiming at and are deadly accurate."

In spite of that and his admission that Mueller would only ever interview him for evidence on "collusion," Caputo, who was bragging last week that his defense fund has twice as much as he claims he has spent in it, insists he did not provide any evidence of such.

Since his initial statements, Caputo has gotten more specific about what he was asked: About meetings between Rick Gates and Stone.

Special counsel Robert Mueller is focusing intensely on alleged interactions between former top Trump campaign official Rick Gates and

political operative Roger Stone, one of President Donald Trump's closest confidants, according to sources with direct knowledge of the matter.

[snip]

The questions have been largely about what was discussed at meetings, including dinners, between Stone and Gates, before and during the campaign, said the sources, who have knowledge of the substance of the recent interviews.

Roger Stone, who continues to offer shifting stories to the press in lieu of actually being interviewed by Mueller (he now claims he meant to say it would soon be the Podestas', plural, time in the barrel to disclaim knowing Podesta's emails had been stolen, though he didn't offer that when his excuse for the Podesta comment was first aired), claims there was only one such meeting.

Still, the timing and claimed explanation for it is still fairly interesting. It occurred just after the NY State Primary that was held on April 19, 2016.

"I only have a record of one dinner with Rick Gates," he said, adding that the guest list included two other political operatives: Michael Caputo, a former Trump campaign aide who was recently interviewed by Mr. Mueller's investigators, and Paul Manafort, who soon after took over as chairman of Mr. Trump's campaign. But Mr. Manafort canceled at the last minute, and Mr. Gates, his deputy, attended in his place.

Mr. Stone said the conversation during the dinner, which fell soon after the New York primary in April 2016, was about the New York State delegate selection for the Republican National Convention. The operatives expressed

concern about whether delegates, at a time of deep division among Republicans, would be loyal to Mr. Trump's vision for the party, Mr. Stone said.

While I find it logical that Caputo was doing delegate counts with Gates, who was the Deputy of the guy doing the Convention counting at that point, I'm less sure Stone stays that close to actual party politics.

Moreover, the three together – Stone, Gates, and Caputo – at such a time (especially if it happened just a week or so later, after the campaign likely learned of emails on offer from George Papadopoulos) might have been remarkably wired in to the outreach from Russia.

We might have more clarity on that if Stone, in his denials, provided the date of the one dinner he admits to. But he chose not to do that.