

CHECKMATE: THE MANAFORT COOPERATION IS PARDON PROOF

Additional information will be provided in the near future.

I was virtually certain that the plea deal Manafort is pleading to today would include cooperation – and I was correct. Andrew Weissmann told Amy Berman Jackson that the deal does require Manafort cooperation.

I was certain not just because of the tease in the Special Counsel announcement, above, that additional information would be forthcoming.

But the fact that no media outlet was able to confirm whether or not the plea would include cooperation could only be possible if Mueller had made silence about that fact part of the deal. Otherwise, Manafort's lawyers would have confirmed that it included no cooperation to placate the President. As it was, no one outside of the deal knew that the plea did include cooperation until Manafort was already pleading guilty.

And at this point, the deal is pardon proof. That was part of keeping the detail secret: to prevent a last minute pardon from Trump undercutting it.

Here's why this deal is pardon proof:

1. Mueller spent the hour and a half delay in arraignment doing ... something. It's possible Manafort even presented the key parts of testimony Mueller needs from him to the grand jury this

morning.

2. The forfeiture in this plea is both criminal and civil, meaning DOJ will be able to get Manafort's \$46 million even with a pardon.
3. Some of the dismissed charges are financial ones that can be charged in various states.

Remember, back in January, Trump told friends and aides that Manafort could incriminate him (the implication was that *only* Manafort could). I believe Mueller needed Manafort to describe what happened in a June 7, 2016 meeting between the men, in advance of the June 9 meeting. I have long suspected there was another meeting at which Manafort may be the only other Trump aide attendee.

And Manafort has probably already provided evidence on whatever Mueller needed.

So here's what Robert Mueller just did: He sewed up the key witness to implicate the President, *and* he paid for the entire investigation. And it's only now lunch time.

As I disclosed July, I provided information to the FBI on issues related to the Mueller investigation, so I'm going to include disclosure statements on Mueller investigation posts from here on out. I will include the disclosure whether or not the stuff I shared with the FBI pertains to the subject of the post.