

DOJ PRE-DUMPS THE STONE TRIAL: WHAT BUZZFEED OBTAINED VIA FOIA

DOJ released the first batch of Mueller 302s in response to BuzzFeed's FOIA.

While the documents are really damning (though, in part, simply because they make things reported in the Mueller Report more visible), they actually are going to be among the least damning documents released to BuzzFeed.

DOJ seems to have released documents that pertain to six Mueller team interviews that will likely come out in live testimony in Roger Stone's trial in the next two weeks. They include interview reports and back-up from three people:

- Rick Gates. These interviews date to April 10, 2018 (PDF 9-25); April 11, 2018 (PDF 26-38); October 25, 2018 (PDF 39-66).
- Michael Cohen. These interviews date to August 7, 2018 (PDF 242-274); September 18, 2018 (PDF 67-95).
- Steve Bannon. This interview is dated February 14, 2018 (PDF 96-241).

All three may testify at Roger Stone's trial, as Gates and Bannon had direct communications with Roger Stone about WikiLeaks and Cohen witnessed a Trump-Stone phone call where Stone discussed WikiLeaks.

Significantly, while the Gates interviews and

the second Cohen interview include testimony that will be repeated at trial, the first Cohen and the Bannon interview were substantially lies (the Mueller Report says this about the first Cohen interview; it's clear Bannon was lying because much of what is recorded was contradicted by his fall 2018 testimony). Thus, to the extent that these men testify, the interviews we're seeing will be introduced as derogatory evidence by Stone.

Arguably, the government used this BuzzFeed FOIA to pre-empt damaging information from Stone.

This release doesn't include the Bannon interview that will be the basis for any testimony in Stone's trial. And it includes just a tiny bit of information from Gates' far more extensive comments about Paul Manafort's Russian entanglements (including the Ukrainian efforts that seem to be a preview of what Rudy Giuliani has been up to). So we're really only getting a snippet of damaging information we'll get over the next two weeks.

Plus, by releasing these documents now, it'll put information that will become public in the next two weeks beyond this existing FOIA, hiding it for some time until BuzzFeed appeals or someone else FOIAs for it. That is, in part, this FOIA "release" is really an attempt to lock down information.

Again, don't get me wrong. This is valuable stuff. Jason Leopold continues to be able to liberate more useful information than Congress can, with their power of subpoena.

But this is mostly just a pre-dump of the Roger Stone trial.