

THE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE OF LEARNING ABOUT ROGER STONE'S "COLLUSION"

On March 27, just days after Bill Barr issued his "summary" of the Mueller Report but well before the Report got released publicly, I wrote a post laying out how Barr obviously understated the complicity of Trump and his flunkies. I noted how he focused exclusively on what the campaign (and not its satellite ratfuckers) did, and only on what they may have done with Russia. As a result, it left a big space for what Roger Stone, according to his indictment, did: attempt to (with uncertain success) optimize the release of the stolen emails.

Stone was not charged with conspiring with WikiLeaks. But then, short of making an argument that WikiLeaks is a known agent of Russia – which the US government has never done – optimizing the WikiLeaks release is not a crime. But assuming that Corsi is correct that Stone got WikiLeaks to hold the Podesta release to dampen the impact of the Access Hollywood video, it is absolutely coordination. And even according to Stone – who believed Trump needed to avoid alienating women to win – dampening the release of the video influenced the election.

Now consider how this behavior falls into Barr's supposed exoneration of Trump campaign involvement in the hack-and-leak.

First, there's Barr's truncated citation of a Mueller Report sentence. [my emphasis throughout]

As the report states: “[T]he investigation did not establish that **members of the Trump Campaign** conspired or **coordinated** with **the Russian government** in its election interference activities.”

Then a footnote defining what the word “coordinated” means in that sentence.

In assessing potential conspiracy charges, the Special Counsel also considered whether **members of the Trump campaign** “coordinated” with Russian election interference activities. The Special Counsel defined “coordinated” as an “agreement—tacit or express—**between the Trump Campaign and the Russian government** on election interference.”

Finally, there’s Barr’s own version.

The second element involved the Russian government’s efforts to conduct computer hacking operations designed to gather and disseminate information to influence the election. The Special Counsel found that Russian government actors successfully hacked into computers and obtained emails from persons affiliated with the Clinton campaign and Democratic Party organizations, and publicly disseminated those materials through various intermediaries, **including WikiLeaks**. Based on these activities, the **Special Counsel brought criminal charges** against

a number of Russian military officers for conspiring to hack into computers in the United States **for purposes of influencing the election**. But as noted above, the Special Counsel did not find that the Trump campaign, or anyone associated with it, conspired or **coordinated with the Russian government** in these efforts, despite multiple offers from Russian-affiliated individuals to assist the Trump campaign.

The exoneration for coordination in Mueller's language, at least, extends only to the Trump campaign, not to rat-fuckers working on the side (one of the things Mueller reportedly asked a lot of witnesses was precisely when and why Stone left the campaign). And at least according to this language, Mueller's assessment of coordination extended only to coordination with the Russian government. So even if Mueller and the US government are getting close to labeling WikiLeaks a Russian entity, it still wouldn't count for this assessment. Unsurprisingly, Barr relies on that language to give the Trump campaign a clean bill of health on the hack-and-leak side.

Most cynically, though, even after Barr acknowledges that the Russians used WikiLeaks to disseminate the stolen emails, the very next sentence doesn't mention the charges Mueller brought against Stone for hiding his own (and through him, the campaign's, including Donald Trump's) coordination of the releases "for purposes of influencing the election."

But we know Stone's indictment has to be in the report. That's because the

report, by regulation, must list all Mueller's prosecutorial decisions. So not only would Mueller describe *that* he indicted Stone, but he probably also explains why he didn't include a conspiracy charge in Stone's indictment (which probably relates primarily to First Amendment concerns, and not any illusions about WikiLeaks' willing service for Russia on this operation). So it must be in the report. But Barr doesn't mention that, indeed, the Trump campaign, through their associated rat-fucker, did actually coordinate on the hack-and-leak and did actually influence the election by doing so, they just didn't coordinate directly with the Russian government.

On this matter, it's crystal clear that Barr cynically limited his discussion of the report to obscure that Mueller had, indeed, found that the campaign "coordinated" on the hack-and-leak for purposes of influencing the election.

When the Report came out, it became clear I was more right than I expected. First, there were two previously unknown incidents showing the evidence against Stone to be worse than previously known. The report showed Rick Gates witnessing a call where Stone, presumably, informed Trump that more files were coming. But it also included testimony from Ted Malloch who, contrary to being an intermediary to Assange (as Corsi had claimed) instead described learning *from* Corsi that WikiLeaks would drop John Podesta emails, backing the claim that Corsi and/or Stone got advanced information about the releases.

But the Report also had an almost entirely redacted section that – the TOC makes clear – includes analysis about whether optimizing email releases with WikiLeaks constitutes a campaign donation.

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As noted, that section is almost entirely redacted, at least in part because of the Stone trial. Nevertheless, in most parts, it parallels the analysis done, in unredacted form, on the June 9 meeting. It has a section on whether these emails constitute a thing of value and whether the benefit was obtained willfully (that part is unredacted and suggests there might be difficulties on this front as well). But it also includes a section on the constitutional implications of defining optimized releases of emails as a campaign finance violation.

iii. Constitutional Considerations

Finally, the First Amendment could pose constraints on a prosecution. Harm to Ongoing Matter

So we should assume that Mueller didn't charge what we're seeing in part for very good First Amendment reasons (though the EDVA indictment of Julian Assange seems to conflict with that analysis).

I raise all this by way of explanation to the many people wondering how the abundant evidence that not just Stone, but Trump himself, worked to optimize the release of the stolen emails did not get charged. Mueller considered it, and in part for reasons that we should all respect, did not charge it.

All that said, people experiencing cognitive dissonance should remember something else.

Mueller's Report only addressed crimes he charged or declined to charge. It did not – he said explicitly on page 2 – address collusion. And while Bill Barr tried to define "collusion" as "conspiracy between the campaign itself and the Russian government," and having done so exonerated Trump of all collusion, the report itself does not do so.

Which is why I keep going back to how Mark Meadows defined “collusion” in a hearing a year ago. In walking George Papadopoulos through his claimed ignorance of any attempt to optimize the emails that Joseph Mifsud told him about, Meadows defined “collusion” as “benefiting from Hillary Clinton emails.”

Mr. Papadopoulos. And after he was throwing these allegations at me, I –

Mr. Meadows. And by allegations, allegations that the Trump campaign was **benefiting from Hillary Clinton emails?**

Mr. Papadopoulos. Something along those lines, sir. And I think I pushed back and I told him, I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about. What you’re talking about is something along the lines of treason. I’m not involved. I don’t know anyone in the campaign who’s involved. And, you know, I really have nothing to do with Russia. That’s – something along those lines is how I think I responded to this person.

Mr. Meadows. So essentially at this point, he was suggesting that **there was collusion** and you pushed back very firmly is what it sounds like. [my emphasis]

One of Trump’s top backers in Congress defines “collusion” as whether the campaign benefitted from the release of Hillary’s stolen emails. And while we haven’t yet seen in trial exhibits that Stone did succeed (though the Malloch testimony seems to suggest we will), what we have seen is that the campaign, from Trump on down, made significant efforts to “collude.”

That’s where I predicted we’d end up after hearing Barr’s very narrow exoneration but before seeing the report: that the campaign “colluded” in ways that Mueller could not charge criminally.