

LIBERATE ALL TRUMP'S CRIMINALS TO SUSTAIN THE LOCKDOWN

According to multiple reports yesterday, Michael Cohen will soon be released to serve out the remainder of his prison sentence in home confinement.

The federal Bureau of Prisons has notified Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former personal attorney, that he will be released early from prison due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to people familiar with the matter and his lawyer.

Cohen is serving a three-year sentence at the federal prison camp in Otisville, NY, where 14 inmates and seven staff members at the complex have tested positive for the virus.

Cohen was scheduled for release in November 2021, but he will be allowed to serve the remainder of his sentence from home confinement, the people said. He will have to undergo a 14-day quarantine at the prison camp before he is released.

Cohen was notified on Thursday of his pending release, and his lawyer, Roger Adler, confirmed it to CNN.

As Josh Gerstein has described, sometimes these promises don't work out.

The spouse of an inmate at one of the hardest-hit federal prisons, in Elkton, Ohio, described a puzzling transfer of prisoners into pre-release quarantine and then out again.

Tammy Hartman said her husband Pete, who's due out of prison in August of

next year, was one of 56 inmates whose names were called on Saturday to report for quarantine so they could be sent on home confinement.

“They were all told: you’re going home,” she said. But on Wednesday, 54 of the men were sent back to their cells. “They told them, sorry, you’re not going anywhere, because they’d approved only two of them to leave.”

“I actually thought he was coming home,” Hartman said of her 59-year-old husband who – like other prisoners mentioned in this story – is serving time on drug charges. “I canceled all his subscriptions to magazines because I thought he’d be home in 14 days.. I’m trying to hold it together.”

Which is, I guess, why Cohen’s lawyers promptly made this public – to make it harder for BOP to renege.

Otisville prison is one of the federal prisons with a growing cluster – currently, officially, with 14 prisoners and 7 guards testing positive. So it is an appropriate places for BOP to attempt to move older, non-violent prisoners. That said, Cohen is not actually that old (just 53) and as far as is public, his health is fine.

A far better case might be made that Paul Manafort should be sent to home confinement. He’s 71 and wasn’t all that healthy when he first went to jail almost two years ago, and he has continued to have health problems since then. His attorney, Kevin Downing, cited those health problems in a letter to BOP asking for his release. Curiously, Downing appears to be thinking exclusively in terms of internal appeals, rather than appealing to a judge, which suggests he thinks his client stands a better chance if someone working for Bill Barr makes the decision (which certainly worked to keep him out of Rikers when he was arraigned in New

York). Perhaps that's because the prison he's in, Loretto, has had no reported cases yet. Manafort has been quarantining since the end of March, so can be sent home if there are cases there.

Paul Manafort is a shithole who sold out the candidate he worked for and his own country. He got fabulously wealthy fronting for dictators and other sleazebags, and stiffed the American taxpayers on the blood money he got in exchange.

But BOP should seriously consider moving him to home confinement for as long as the COVID outbreak lasts. Manafort was not nor should he have been sentenced to a death for his crimes. And if you can't support that move for his miserable humanity, then do it for others he might infect, like the far poorer guards who tend to him.

Cohen and Manafort are not the only Trump criminals who may dodge full prison terms because of this virus. As bmaz noted, yesterday Amy Berman Jackson rejected Roger Stone's bid for a new trial. While BOP doesn't assign spots to people all that quickly in any case, for new non-violent prisoners, BOP is not rushing people into incarceration. And Stone, at 67, is also old enough to be considered a higher risk.

So rather than starting rebellions against stay-at-home orders in Michigan, Minnesota, and Virginia, Trump should encourage Bill Barr to liberate his criminal co-conspirators, along with the similarly situated men of color incarcerated with them.

But the only reason to remove Paul Manafort from an environment where he'd be more likely to contract the virus is if there's a shut-down. So if Trump wants his criminals liberated – or wants Stone to remain out of prison long enough for the post-election pardon – then he should be rooting for a continued shut-down.