

THERE'S LOTS OF REASON TO THINK STEVE BANNON LIED; BUT HE MAY ALSO HAVE TOLD THE TRUTH, ONCE

The LAT has a big scoop on some criminal referrals the Senate Intelligence Committee made on July 19, 2019. The biggest news is that SSCI referred Steve Bannon for his unconvincing story about his Russian back channel – though it's likely that Bannon cleaned up that testimony in January 2019.

Don Jr

The LAT describes that the Committee believed that the Trump spawn lied about when they learned about the Aras Agalarov meeting.

In the two page-letter, the committee raised concerns that testimony given to it by the president's family and advisors contradicted what Rick Gates, the former deputy campaign chairman, told the Special Counsel about when people within the Trump campaign knew about a June 9 meeting at Trump tower with a Russian lawyer.

This conflict in stories was previously known; it shows up in the Mueller Report.

It's interesting primarily because the referral took place after Don Jr's second SSCI interview, which was on June 12, 2019. It stands to reason that the failson's willingness to sit for a second interview with SSCI – but not any interview with Mueller – strongly suggests that he had reason to know that Mueller had evidence that SSCI did not. If the only thing that SSCI believed Don Jr lied about was the June 9

meeting, then it suggests they did not know Mueller's full focus.

Sam Clovis

LAT also says that SSCI believes Clovis lied about his relationship with Peter Smith, the old Republican rat-fucker who made considerable effort to find Hillary's deleted emails.

The committee also asked the Justice Department to investigate Sam Clovis, a former co-chairman of the Trump campaign, for possibly lying about his interactions with Peter W. Smith, a Republican donor who led a secret effort to obtain former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's missing emails.

Clovis could not be reached.

That Clovis lied is not surprising – it's obvious from the interview reports released thus far in the BuzzFeed FOIA that his story changed radically over the course of a few hours. Notably, however, SSCI only referred Clovis for lying about Peter Smith. It's pretty clear that Clovis also lied, at least at first, about the campaign's willingness to cozy up to Russia.

There are four redacted descriptions of people who lied to Mueller in the Report; one of those may explain why Clovis was not charged.

Note that Clovis' lack of candor about other topics makes his denials that George Papadopoulos told him about the email warning equally dubious.

Erik Prince and Steve Bannon

Finally, the story says SSCI referred Erik Prince *and* Steve Bannon for their conflicting stories about their back channel to Kirill Dmitriev.

According to the letter, the committee believed Bannon may have lied about his interactions with Erik Prince, a private security contractor; Rick Gerson, a hedge fund manager; and Kirill Dmitriev, the head of a Russian sovereign fund.

It is well-established that Prince lied (indeed, HPSCI also referred his testimony). His lawyer made similar denials to the LAT as he has made elsewhere.

Matthew L. Schwartz, a lawyer for Prince, defended his client's cooperation with Capitol Hill and Mueller's office.

"There is nothing new for the Department of Justice to consider, nor is there any reason to question the Special Counsel's decision to credit Mr. Prince and rely on him in drafting its report," he said.

Given that DOJ turned over an email from Schwartz to Aaron Zelinsky in response to a FOIA in the Stone case, it's clear both that Prince was being investigated for issues beyond just his lies about the Russian back channel, but also that it's likely that Billy Barr interfered with that investigation while he was "fixing" the Mike Flynn and Roger Stone ones, as well.

That's interesting because SSCI referred Bannon as well.

Like everyone else, it's not news that he shaded the truth at first. Bannon was scripted by the White House to deny discussing sanctions prior to Mike Flynn's call to Sergei Kislyak. Bannon's efforts to shade the truth were apparent from one of his early 302s. A Stone warrant affidavit describes Bannon denying his conversations with Roger Stone about WikiLeaks before he admitted at least one.

When BANNON spoke with investigators during a voluntary proffer on February

14, 201'8, he initially denied knowing whether the October 4, 2016 email to STONE was about WikiLeaks. Upon further questioning, BANNON acknowledged that he was asking STONE about WikiLeaks, because he had heard that STONE had a channel to ASSANGE, and BANNON had been hoping for releases of damaging information that morning.

And for Bannon's fourth known Mueller interview, he got a proffer, suggesting his testimony changed in ways that might have implicated him in a crime.

What's most interesting, given how everyone agrees his testimony and Prince's materially differ, is that he testified to things before the grand jury he subsequently tried to back off. More interesting still, only the relevant parts of Bannon's grand jury testify got shared with Stone. That means other parts – presumably, given the proffer agreement, the more legally damning parts – remain secret.

SSCI believes that Bannon may have lied to the committee.

But unlike all the others listed here, there's reason to believe Bannon may also have told the truth to the grand jury, once, possibly relating to his actions involving Erik Prince.

That all may be moot if Barr managed to squelch any Prince investigation while he was negating the Stone and Flynn prosecutions. But he can't entirely eliminate grand jury testimony.