

BILL BARNETT'S SECOND GRATUITOUS SWIPE AT THE MUELLER INVESTIGATION COLLAPSES

Shortly after FBI Agent William Barnett's 302 came out, I pointed out his attack on Jeannie Rhee said more about his own workplace behavior problems than it did about Rhee. Because she asked questions on the Russian side of Mike Flynn's exposure, he reacted hostilely, and even in response to a polite comment that she looked forward to working with Barnett, he responded with a dickish statement that he would not work with her.

In the 10 days since the release of Barnett's 302, his attack on Andrew Weissmann has also collapsed.

Barnett offered this as an example to substantiate his claim that there was a "get Trump" attitude among some Mueller prosecutors, especially what he refers to as the "all stars."

BARNETT said it seems there was always someone at SCO who claimed to have a lead on information that would prove the collusion only to have the information be a dead end. BARNETT provided an example: WEISSMANN said there was a meeting on a yacht near Greece that was going to be proof of collusion, "quid pro quo." BARNETT said with a day or two the information was not substantiated.

In his book (completed before Barnett's interview but released after it), Weissmann described such leads otherwise: as a lead dug up by the press that investigators had to chase down, often wasting a lot of time.

Now, however, the Special Counsel's Office was enjoying a rare upside of working a high-profile case: As we began boring into the events of the campaign time period, a swarm of enterprising reporters was churning up their own evidence in parallel. At times, the stories the media published proved to be dead ends, which we, nevertheless, were obliged to spend time running down. These numerous leads would include our spending months debunking reports about Trump's watering down support for Ukraine in the Republican Party platform during the convention—which would have been favorable to Russia's interests in Ukraine and thus raised a red flag—and our running to ground, around the globe, the claim by a Belarusian call girl that she had tapes of Deripaska admitting to Russian election interference in the 2016 election.

Plus, as Weissmann explained to Politico the other day, Barnett was not in a position to know what Weissmann was doing.

Weissmann said he had a general awareness of who Barnett was but "never dealt with him" because Barnett was not assigned to his team. The top FBI agent and analyst assigned to the Manafort unit, Weissmann said, "got along really well."

"I read that and I was trying to understand," Weissmann said of Barnett's complaints. "I just couldn't make any sense of it because he seemed supportive of the [Flynn] prosecution but just generally negative about the office."

Weissmann also wondered about the timing, noting Barnett interviewed with internal DOJ investigators in recent weeks, and his interview summary was made public just days later.

“It was certainly odd for that to be submitted in court so quickly,” he said. “But I’m not part of that litigation and I don’t know all of the ins and outs – I haven’t heard the government’s reasoning and maybe there is a rationale for it.”

DOJ is hiding Barnett’s apparently complimentary views on the main prosecutor Barnett worked with, the only one whose behavior is pertinent to the Flynn prosecution, while releasing his comments that show either a willingness to comment on parts of the investigation with which he’s unfamiliar or, in the case of Rhee, to repackage his hostile workplace behavior as an attack on the woman involved.

Update to reflect that the sex worker lead and the boat lead here are different. The one that Barnett references is Manafort’s trip with Tom Barrack immediately after leaving the case. That one also was part of the investigation for a long time, with the Barrack funding of Manafort even longer.