

RUDY'S COUP

ABC, which was the first outlet to report on a split within the Trump camp over strategy going forward, called it a coup (meaning, within the campaign).

As President Donald Trump's legal efforts challenging the election results continue to hit dead ends, his campaign and legal teams have descended into chaos behind the scenes as many brace for the end of the post-election fight, multiple sources tell ABC News.

Since launching a long-shot effort to overturn the election results through baseless claims of voter fraud, President Trump has suffered a dizzying barrage of court losses and setbacks around the country, leading him late last week to install Rudy Giuliani, his personal lawyer, to lead the legal efforts going forward.

But Giuliani's ascent has led to an explosion of infighting and disillusionment among the president's longstanding legal team and top campaign officials, resulting in dueling factions emerging from inside the president's dwindling campaign, multiple sources tell ABC News.

Over the weekend, Giuliani and his own team of lawyers, which also includes Trump campaign legal adviser Jenna Ellis, attempted what was described to ABC News as an internal campaign "coup"—an attempt to wrestle power away from the current longstanding Trump campaign leadership by claiming the president had given them full control moving forward, multiple sources said.

Giuliani's team has taken over office space in the Trump campaign's Arlington, Virginia, headquarters and Ellis, who

White House aides have previously expressed concern about, began telling Trump campaign staffers they now report to her.

[snip]

Advisers fear that Giuliani and Ellis' heightened influence over Trump will continue to result in the president giving in to his worst impulses, sources said.

In one story alluding to Rudy's take-over of the legal fight, the WaPo reports that Boris Epshteyn is involved, along with the DiGenova and Toensing and Sidney Powell dead-enders from the Russian investigation and impeachment fights. (According to the SSCI Report, Epshteyn pitched Trump on a third Trump Tower Moscow deal during the election.)

Referring to the withdrawal of former Trump attorneys in Pennsylvania, an official said, "Rudy wants to make arguments in court that other lawyers are not willing to make. It's not that they weren't willing to represent us. When they intersect with Rudy's world, they don't want to make those arguments that Rudy wants to make."

Two campaign officials said Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien, attorney Justin Clark and others were barely involved anymore in the legal fight, with it all being "Rudy all the time," in the words of one.

"Rudy is calling the shots, and we are following," one senior Republican involved in the campaign said. "I wouldn't have organized it this way, but that's the way the president wants it."

One Republican lawyer close to the campaign said they too quickly jumped to accusations without proof of fraud and

instead should have asked for examinations in states to glean evidence first.

This Republican said the campaign also should have engaged higher-power lawyers earlier on, instead of hiring “TV show lawyers.”

“The lawyers on the outside, none of them are supportive of the Rudy strategy,” this person said. “Rudy is not advancing the cause of the law.”

Giuliani is seeking to orchestrate a large news conference at the RNC headquarters on Capitol Hill for later this week, but Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel is unlikely to attend, officials said. He is working with Boris Epshteyn, who in between stints as a campaign aide worked as a Sinclair TV commentator and appeared with him in court on Tuesday.

Robert Costa has noted that Rudy doesn't actually think he'll win any of these. He claims to want to force this decision to the House.

The ploy is probably even better understood as disinformation affecting all sides. Actual lawyers know that Rudy can't legally win. They dismiss his apparently futile efforts as a bid to get rich and not a serious effort to undermine a democratic election. Telling that story allows them to play along – it's just crazy Rudy leading crazy Donald astray, not any serious attempt to end American democracy. Their inaction facilitates Rudy's efforts.

All the while, Trump's supporters grow more and more certain that Trump is being denied his rightful victory by cheating, effectively convincing them that Trump isn't the one who is trying to cheat, but rather Biden is. At the very least, that will ensure that Republicans in Congress will have no leeway to work with the Biden Administration. Given past events, it's

likely it will lead to violence.

So long as Rudy claims to be pursuing something, anything, it'll delay the peaceful transfer of power and allow Trump to take steps – installing loyalists at DOD, firing the guy in charge of protecting the Georgia run-off, possibly even firing the FBI Director – that will make any further efforts at consolidating power still easier. Republicans, thus far, have played along (though they may be balking at Acting Secretary Christopher Miller's plan to draw down troops in Afghanistan and Iraq). Republicans are okay harming the country to ensure that Biden is weaker when he does finally start the transition.

And if Trump somehow manages to hold on to power, the Republicans will happily blame the coup on Trump, even while benefitting from the roll-back of democracy.

That leaves all options for something more aggressive on the table.

By all reports, Rudy Giuliani looked like a crazy old man arguing a facetious case in Williamsport, PA. He doesn't care though. He's got criminal exposure for all the sleazy influence peddling with mobbed up Ukrainians to fight off, and keeping Trump in power is the easiest way to do that. Rudy Giuliani has nothing to lose.