

MISSING THE NATIONAL SECURITY CRISES FOR THE TRUMP TEMPER TANTRUMS

Even after Republicans and Vladimir Putin have conceded that Donald Trump will no longer be President in 35 days, key parts of the press corps seem unable to look beyond Trump's temper tantrums to the state of the country.

NBC, for example, has a 17-paragraph story about Pat Cipollone's efforts to persuade Trump not to fire Chris Wray and maybe Chad Wolf and maybe Gina Haspel and who knows maybe some more national security figures Trump is pissy about because they haven't catered to his personal demands. The story doesn't once mention that these same national security officials – especially Wray and Wolf – are neck deep in a crisis attempting to assess and respond to the SolarWinds compromise of multiple US agencies.

While Trump's frustrations with Attorney General Bill Barr boiled over in recent days, and Barr resigned on Monday, the president's advisers hope he's been persuaded against ousting Wray. Multiple current and former senior administration officials said firing Wray does not appear imminent, but they also point out that the president could make such a decision on a whim at any time. Indeed officials said they are prepared for Trump to go on a firing spree before leaving office next month.

"I wouldn't take anything off the table in coming weeks," the senior administration official said of personnel changes, as well as presidential pardons. The official said to expect "some more fairly significant terminations in the national security or

intelligence community.”

That this story could even be reported with an unrelenting focus on Trump’s revenge fantasies and not, instead, an extended discussion of the way these revenge fantasies have distracted the entire Administration from urgent crises which Trump’s past revenge fantasies have invited and made worse is an alarming failure of basic framing.

Similarly, in the middle of a 19-paragraph AP story on the transition at DOJ from Bill Barr to Jeffrey Rosen, it summarizes the main point of the story: the biggest issue before DOJ as it prepares for pardonpalooza, continues to cope with running prisons and fraud investigations during a pandemic, sues some of the world’s biggest tech companies, and deals with Mexico’s withdrawal from virtually all drug enforcement cooperation is whether or not the Attorney General, some Attorney General, any Attorney General appoints a special counsel to investigate Hunter Biden.

As Barr exits, the biggest thing by far hanging over the Trump Justice Department is its investigation into Hunter Biden, which involves multiple U.S. attorney offices and FBI field offices.

The AP is so deep inside Trump’s manic delusions that it states, as fact, that appointing a special counsel would by itself make for a more complicated investigation, as if someone could just chase Rudy Giuliani conspiracies for four years without Biden’s Attorney General making a solid case the person should be fired.

Appointing a special counsel for the Hunter Biden probe would also signal a more prolonged and complicated investigation than the current inquiry, so far largely centered on his taxes.

DOJ has already spent something like 4 US Attorney years investigating Hunter Biden and has yet to charge him with a single crime; while it remains to be seen whether the tax charges are real, at some point an investigation will butt up against the reality that even the politicized Scott Brady one did: most of the allegations against Hunter Biden are the product of very frothy conspiracy theorizing and aggressive disinformation that straight reporters are not obliged to adopt.

It is useful – important even – to report on the Trump's temper tantrums. But his tantrums, at this point, are most important for the way they've paralyzed and corrupted the entire government during a time it faces multiple urgent crises. Don't let sources dodge how indulging the President's childish whims means they, too, are failing to do their real job serving the country.

The country is burning. It is burning, in significant part, because the President has always prioritized his own personal vendettas over the good of the country.

If you need to report on how Trump has put his own revenge fantasies over all else during his Lamé Duck, do so as a first step towards holding him accountable for the wreckage that has resulted, not to indulge those fantasies as if the rest of us should care about them anymore.