

PAUL MANAFORT KNEW TOM BARRACK WAS WORKING WITH “OUR FRIENDS”

As I noted yesterday, Tom Barrack’s (known – there may have been a second) Mueller interview revealed what his indictment didn’t say explicitly: Paul Manafort was working with Barrack on a Trump energy speech at issue in the indictment. That suggests that one thing Manafort did for one of the guys that got him hired (the other was Roger Stone) was to cater campaign policy to him.

The complaint originally charged against alleged Barrack co-conspirator Rashid Al Malik on June 25, 2019 (obtained just five days after the FBI interviewed Barrack on these issues, which – according to the new indictment – would have alerted them that Barrack was trying to hide this relationship) provides more detail on Manafort’s role in that energy speech and other events relating to Barrack’s ties to UAE.

Even before the energy speech, for example, on May 1, 2016 Barrack emailed Manafort from Abu Dhabi where he was meeting with Mohamed bin Zayed.

On or about May 1, 2016, [Barrack] emailed a senior member of the Campaign ([Manafort]): “I am in Abu Dhabi with [MbZ]. Call if u can.” Later that day, [Barrack] emailed [Manafort] with an upbeat assessment of the meeting and mentioned the possibility of a meeting in the United States between the UAE leaders and [Trump].

Once Trump wrapped up his primary win on May 4, Barrack wrote Al Malik and told him to tell MbZ to “Pack his bags,” presumably for a visit to the US to meet with Trump (which may suggest

that on this matter, as with the Russian one, Trump's handlers tried to delay controversial meetings until after he sealed the nomination). Al Malik said that MbZ would meet with the two of them the next month when – he incorrectly anticipated – MbZ would be in the US to meet with Trump. The day Al Malik made that prediction, Barrack, “met with several senior members of the Campaign that same day in New York City.” Given Barrack's past and future relationship with Jared Kushner, his meetings with people beyond Manafort (if even he met with Manafort) are of interest.

In the complaint, the language on the draft speech is far more detailed than in the indictment, possibly even consistent with Barrack writing the entire first draft of the speech, then sharing it with “him” (the complaint isn't sure whether that's a reference to Trump or Manafort).

The next day, May 14, 2016, after Al Malik asked for a specific mention of MbZ in it, Barrack and Manafort discussed whether to keep specific mention of MbZ and a Saudi (probably Mohammed bin Salman) in the speech.

[Barrack] wrote to [Manafort]: “How did you like the energy paper[?] I thought I did a really good job. The only sensitive part is whether you want to name *[the senior UAE and KSA government officials]* by name. But I think it would be a good idea.” [Manafort] replied: “I left their names in the draft.”
[italicized brackets original, the others mine]

Six days later, Manafort wrote back complaining that, “It has become a more political speech but there is reference to working with our allies regarding energy policy.” After reading the “America First” speech as written, Barrack described it as “novice and imbecilic,” then said, “[H]e better figure out a way to get one paragraph to balance foreign-policy concerns for

energy dependent allies in the gulf.” Later that day, Manafort wrote Barrack, “Send me an insert that works for our friends. I will push to get it included.” Barrack did send language, to which Manafort responded, “I am working to have paragraph added.”

When Barrack sent Al Malik the speech without the specific mention of MbZ the next day and Al Malik complained that it had been pulled, Barrack explained, “Delicate time. [MbZ] should have come!”

On May 26, Manafort sent Barrack the speech calling it the likely final version, and assuring Barrack that, “It has the language you want.”

To be clear, Manafort has not been charged and there’s no reason to believe he will be. But it shows he both knew what Barrack was up to, and was happy to use his position to facilitate foreign influence peddling.