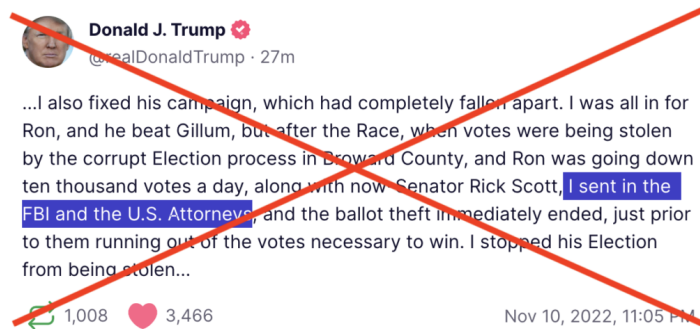


YES, DOJ IS REPORTEDLY INVESTIGATING THE 2018 ELECTION THAT TRUMP JUST INVOKED WITH RON DESANTIS

In the wake of Tuesday's shellacking of Democrats in Florida and the losses of winnable seats by Trump endorsees, Republicans are explicitly discussing Ron DeSantis as if he is the head of the party, in lieu of Trump. That set off a temper tantrum on the second shittiest social media site run by a narcissistic billionaire [sic] in which Trump:

- Accused Fox of fighting him and likened the focus on DeSantis to the 2016 election
- Claimed his endorsement of DeSantis in 2018 was a "nuclear weapon" that took out Adam Putnam
- Took credit for DeSantis's victory over Andrew Gillum
- Claimed he "sent in the FBI and the U.S. Attorneys, and the ballot theft immediately ended, just prior to them running out of the votes necessary to win"

This last bullet, which seems to claim that Trump deployed DOJ resources to help DeSantis win, has attracted a great of attention.



It would be utterly corrupt to imagine that Trump used DOJ resources to help in an election – though there is evidence he did in 2020: when Bill Barr’s efforts to undermine the Mike Flynn prosecution released altered Peter Strzok notes that Trump used in an attack on Joe Biden. He of course tried to do far more, going so far as attempting to replace Jay Rosen with Jeffrey Clark to give DOJ sanction to frivolous lawsuits.

Plus, people are far too quickly suggesting this claim is made up entirely, and that there’s no evidence of misconduct in 2018. That’s true not just because Trump’s lies generally have *some* basis, albeit really tenuous, in reality.

Just ten days ago, after all, the NYT reported that prosecutors on at least two investigative teams (which might actually be prosecutors bringing together networked conspiracies as seemed likely for 14 months), implicitly boosted by cooperation from Joel Greenberg, are investigating the 2018 Stop the Steal effort in Broward County.

The NYT article focused on efforts by Trump’s rat-fucker and friends to shut down challenges to the vote count: a Jacob Engels/Proud Boy mob in Broward County.

President Donald J. Trump and other top Republicans were stoking claims that the election had been stolen, and their supporters were protesting in the streets. Members of the far-right group the Proud Boys and people close to Roger J. Stone Jr., including Representative Matt Gaetz, took part in the action as

the crowd was chanting "Stop the Steal."

The time was 2018, the setting was southern Florida, and the election in question was for governor and a hotly contested race that would help determine who controlled the United States Senate.

Now, four years later, the Justice Department is examining whether the tactics used then served as a model for the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

In recent months, prosecutors overseeing the seditious conspiracy case of five members of the Proud Boys have expanded their investigation to examine the role that Jacob Engels – a Florida Proud Boy who accompanied Mr. Stone to Washington for Jan. 6 – played in the 2018 protests, according to a person briefed on the matter.

[snip]

The 2018 protests were triggered by the tight outcome of the races for United States Senate and Florida governor. On election night, the Republican Senate candidate, Rick Scott, declared victory over the Democrat, Bill Nelson, but the race was close enough that local officials were set to hold recounts in key locations like Broward County.

Prominent Republicans, including Mr. Trump and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, suggested on social media that the Democrats were trying to steal the election. Mr. Engels promoted an event in Broward County, writing on Twitter that he was headed there "to handle this situation" and was going to "STOP THE STEAL."

On Nov. 9, a group of about 100 angry protesters, including members of the Proud Boys, descended on the Broward

County elections office, carrying pro-Scott and pro-Trump signs and protesting the recount.

The event drew support from several far-right activists in Florida linked to Mr. Stone – among them, Ali Alexander, who later organized Stop the Steal events around the 2020 election, and Joseph Biggs, a leader of the Proud Boys who has since been charged alongside Mr. Tarrio in the Jan. 6 seditious conspiracy case.

Undoubtedly, the Proud Boys are not the FBI (though the FBI in this phase was far too credulous of the Proud Boys). But given the NYT report, it is nevertheless the case that Trump-related Broward County rat-fuckery in 2018 not only happened but is already under investigation.

It may even be the case that DOJ collected information about such things in near real time. DOJ obtained renewed warrants on three Roger Stone accounts on August 3, 2018. It continued to investigate Stone and associates at least through October 2018. And an investigation into the rat-fucker remained ongoing through his November 2019 trial and into at least April 2020.

Again, that doesn't mean that Trump's specific claim – that DOJ was involved in all this – is specifically true. It means that before you dismiss it out of hand, you should ask what bread crumbs of reality this probable lie is based on.

When Trump started threatening DeSantis, I immediately thought of Roger Stone, because collecting dirt with which to exert political pressure is what Trump's rat-fucker does and because Stone was always active in these same circles. And the Broward County Stop the Steal effort may be the least of it.