

DOJ SUBPOENAED OVER FIVE MONTHS OF MAR-A-LAGO SURVEILLANCE VIDEO

There's a detail that may provide important context to new reporting from CNN and NYT about Jack Smith's pursuit of more information about the surveillance video obtained from Mar-a-Lago. Both pieces report that Smith recently obtained the testimony of Mathew Calamari Jr., the head of security for Trump Org , and Sr., the Chief Operating Officer for Trump's company (the latter of whom was included in Alvin Bragg's investigation of the company).

Both outlets describe how that testimony is linked to an investigation into Walt Nauta, whom (per NYT) DOJ chose to investigate rather than seek further cooperation after he gave incomplete testimony last summer and fall. Both describe those subpoenas in the context of a larger effort, absent cooperation from Nauta, to understand the surveillance footage obtained in response to a June 24, 2022 subpoena. From NYT:

[P]rosecutors appear to be trying to fill in some gaps in their knowledge about the movement of the boxes, created in part by their handling of another potentially key witness, Mr. Trump's valet, Walt Nauta. Prosecutors believe Mr. Nauta has failed to provide them with a full and accurate account of his role in any movement of boxes containing the classified documents.

[snip]

Prosecutors have also issued several subpoenas to Mr. Trump's company, the Trump Organization, seeking additional surveillance footage from Mar-a-Lago, his residence and private club in Florida, people with knowledge of the

matter said. While the footage could shed light on the movement of the boxes, prosecutors have questioned a number of witnesses about gaps in the footage, one of the people said.

But hoping to understand why some of the footage from the storage camera appears to be missing or unavailable – and whether that was a technological issue or something else – the prosecutors subpoenaed the software company that handles all of the surveillance footage for the Trump Organization, including at Mar-a-Lago.

Remember that Trump originally claimed he was subpoenaed on June 22, only to have Beryl Howell correct that claim. Such inconsistencies – such as whether Jay Bratt sent Evan Corcoran a note asking him to put a lock on the storage room, or informing it that it did not comply with CFR requirements for storing classified materials – have often reflected a stupid Trump cover story.

Among the things under investigation, per CNN, is a text message Nauta sent Calamari Sr. after DOJ first subpoenaed surveillance footage from Trump Organization.

The Calamaris are among several witnesses expected to testify in Smith's investigation on Thursday, sources said. Prosecutors have previously brought in lower-level Trump employees for questioning about the surveillance footage, including how it may have been handled in response to the subpoena for it and if it could have been tampered with, two sources told CNN this week.

Investigators also have previously asked about a text message from Nauta to Calamari Sr. and subsequent conversations about the surveillance footage, according to two of the sources. The Justice Department

questioned Nauta months ago about the handling of the boxes, and he told the FBI about being directed by Trump, CNN previously reported.

[Update] The Guardian reports that Nauta asked Calamari Sr. to call him about the DOJ subpoena.

Both Calamaris testified to the federal grand jury in Washington on Thursday, and were questioned in part on a text message that Trump's valet, Walt Nauta, had sent them around the time that the justice department last year asked for the surveillance footage, one of the people said.

The text message is understood to involve Nauta asking Matthew Calamari Sr to call him back about the justice department's request, one of the people said – initially a point of confusion for the justice department, which appears to have thought the text was to Calamari Jr.

DOJ likely would never have learned of this text message if Nauta had fully cooperated last summer. But they learned about it, and partly as a result, men who know Trump's most cherished secrets had to testify before a grand jury.

Trump was at his Irish property this week, tentatively scheduled to stay overnight last night, but he left Ireland yesterday, around 12:30 ET, falsely claiming he was doing so to testify in his rape trial. Learning details of the testimony from the Calamaris is a more likely explanation than the rape trial, but with as many investigations as there are into Trump, it could be anything.

One thing coverage of the stolen documents investigation doesn't emphasize enough, though, is that 18 USC 793 has a conspiracy clause. Anyone – like Nauta, and potentially even the Calamaris – who conspires with someone else to

hoard classified documents is exposed to the same punishment – ten years per document – as the guy refusing to give those documents back.

Plopped in the middle of the NYT story, with little explanation, is a reference to the Trump Org's ties to the Saudi LIV golf tournament.

One of the previously unreported subpoenas to the Trump Organization sought records pertaining to Mr. Trump's dealings with a Saudi-backed professional golf venture known as LIV Golf, which is holding tournaments at some of Mr. Trump's golf resorts.

It is unclear what bearing Mr. Trump's relationship with LIV Golf has on the broader investigation, but it suggests that the prosecutors are examining certain elements of Mr. Trump's family business.

Back to inconsistencies between the DOJ and Trump story: Another discrepancy in the stories DOJ and Trump have told is whether or not Trump greeted Jay Bratt on June 3 at Mar-a-Lago. But no one contests that Trump went from there – that very same day! – to Bedminster, where he was hosting the Saudis, who not only are paying him an undisclosed amount for the golf tournaments, but who have funded a project in Oman and gave Trump's son-in-law \$2 billion to mismanage. When investigators directed by Tim Parlatore searched Bedminster for documents last year, they found none.

When I think about the way Trump went from that subpoena response stunt to Bedminster, I can't help but think of the way the Biden Administration was blindsided by Saudi involvement in China's effort to normalize relations between the Kingdom and Iran. That's the kind of surprise that might reflect some surveillance had gone dark.

Here's something to remember about the video, though. DOJ asked for over five months of

surveillance footage, starting on January 10, 2022.

The subpoena was served on counsel on June 24 2022 directed to the Custodian of Records for the Trump Organization, and sought:

Any and all surveillance records videos images, photographs, and/or CCTV from internal cameras located on ground floor (basement) [redacted second location] on the Mar-a-Lago property located at 1100 S Ocean Blvd. Palm Beach, FL 33480 from the time period of January 10, 2022 to present.

And DOJ seems to have asked for surveillance video from two locations: outside the storage room, and somewhere else. That second location might explain the redacted parts of the search warrant affidavit that provided explanations for why DOJ thought Trump might have documents stored in his residence or his office.

More importantly, the subpoena starts eight days before NARA took possession of 15 boxes of documents and covers over five months. That is, if Trump Org had fully complied (and not everyone keeps surveillance footage that long), DOJ would have surveillance footage covering at least two curation processes: the one in January that resulted in Trump only returning 15 boxes of documents, and the one in June, deciding which 38 documents to return and which to retain.

But absent gaps, that surveillance footage would also show something else: any *other* people, besides Walt Nauta and the maintenance guy who helped him move boxes, walking in and out of that storage room.

As both CNN and NYT report, there *are* gaps.

DOJ got enough information from those videos to know that, sometime after DOJ sent a subpoena on

May 11, Nauta moved boxes out of the storage room. They may have video showing him moving the boxes back sometime after June 3. That's what they used to get the August search warrant in the first place. But as noted, DOJ provided some reason to believe that documents might be found in Trump's office or residence, which might reflect a second surveillance angle.

All of which leaves open the possibility that DOJ thinks *something else* may have happened during those surveillance footage gaps, other than Nauta walking in and out of the storage room.