

DEVLIN BARRETT AND MIKE SCHMIDT MISTAKE THE FOX IN THE HENHOUSE FOR A GUARD PUPPY

I'm used to Mike Schmidt ignoring Trump's weaponization of DOJ against his rivals during the first term. I'm used to Devlin Barrett credulously writing down propaganda that right wing law enforcement sources tell him to write down as if it were true.

But this, from the two of them, is a remarkable exercise in disinformation in service of a weaponized investigation.

They describe that a fox is in the hen house, but are so ignorant, naive, or corrupt that they describe the fox, instead, as a guard dog.

The factual details the story describes are:

- Kash Patel is investigating his *claim* that he found burn bags full of classified documents which, he claims, is proof people intended to destroy them (but which sources for the story explain is really dumb because any documents found in a burn bag would be on digital servers too)
- Paul Abbate (who was considered a candidate to be Director of FBI after Jim Comey was fired) is a subject of the investigation

- Kash put the investigation in WDVA, basing venue on a storage facility there, to avoid DC grand juries
- The US Attorney for WDVA, Todd Gilbert, recently resigned shortly after being appointed
- John Durham's lead FBI Agent, Jack Eckenrode, who endorsed Kash to be FBI Director, is conducting interviews in the investigation
- "One of the documents investigators have been asking about...was declassified in 2020, while Mr. Trump was in office"

The men describe the Durham Report as Devlin described it in 2023 when he credulously parroted Durham's claimed findings, without mentioning how badly the report itself undermined Durham's claims.

Mr. Durham ultimately concluded that the F.B.I.'s work on the Russia investigation suffered from "confirmation bias" against Mr. Trump.

Mr. Durham brought two separate cases to trial on charges that people lied to the F.B.I. in the course of its Russia investigation, but both trials ended in quick acquittals.

Such a description was sloppy in 2023 but is inexcusable now, in the wake of the declassification of the classified annex. The classified annex showed that by July 2021, Durham should have concluded that the premise of

his entire investigation was based on documents fabricated by Russian spies to frame Hillary.

Here's the NYT story on that, in case Devlin and NYT Mike have difficulties learning about this.

Once you understand that the classified annex disclosed that John Durham and Jack Eckenrode knowingly spent years investigating Hillary's people based off a Russian fabrication – literally committing the crime they were investigating – then Kash's burn bag claim would most immediately implicate Durham and his team, including Eckenrode. Durham went to great lengths to obscure that he had been chasing Russian disinformation, even in his classified annex. Such an effort bespeaks guilty conscience, the kind of guilty conscience that might lead someone to attempt to destroy evidence.

If this were a real investigation, Eckenrode would be a suspect, not the lead investigator.

Worse still, if Kash imagines (or claims to imagine) he's found new, hard copy versions of what he himself helped declassify in 2020 – documents that included a report about the SVR documents bearing John Ratcliffe's name (but undoubtedly written with Kash), heavily redacted notes from John Brennan, and a somewhat redacted version of the CIA version of a referral to the FBI – then the steps that Durham's team (that is, Eckenrode) took to access those documents in 2019 and afterwards would likewise be a central focus of any credible investigation.

Indeed, the apparent fact that Durham – that is, Eckenrode – never presented an FBI version of a September 7, 2016 referral purportedly sent to the FBI, which none of the FBI witnesses remember seeing, would be a central issue in any investigation.

That referral is something that, if it exists in hard copy, if it exists at all, might present new investigative leads.

But also would raise still more questions about

the criminal conduct of Eckenrode and Durham – their willing quest to chase disinformation created by Russian spies to frame Hillary Clinton.

And it would raise real questions about whether, after chasing a Russian fabrication for years, Kash's FBI decided to start fabricating evidence themselves.

This is an investigation led by someone who should be a chief suspect. Such investigations never turn out well.