

DONALD TRUMP WANTS A \$5 BILLION PREMIUM FOR CONFESSING HIS WEAPONIZATION CLAIMS ARE BULLSHIT

Yesterday, Karoline Leavitt excused Trump's demands for prosecutions of his adversaries by claiming poor Donald Trump was targeted by ... Joe Biden:

The President is fulfilling his promise to restore a Department of Justice that demands accountability. And it is not weaponizing the Department of Justice to demand accountability for *those who weaponized* the Department of Justice. And nobody knows what that looks like more than President Trump. We are not going to tolerate gaslighting from anyone in the media or from anyone on the other side, who is trying to say that it's the President who is weaponizing the DOJ. It was Joe Biden and *his* Attorney General who weaponized the DOJ. Joe Biden used this sacred American institution to go after his political opponent in the middle of an election year. And you look at people like Adam Schiff and like James Comey and like Leticia James who the President is rightfully frustrated. He wants accountability for these corrupt fraudsters who abused their power who abused their oath of office, to target the former President and then candidate for the highest office in the land. And I think the President is reaffirmed in those frustrations and his hope for accountability by the millions and millions of people who reelected him to this office with a mandate to demand accountability. And the President has

not been shy about this, Gabe. In fact when he traveled to the Department of Justice earlier this year – all of you were there to cover it – he said, quote, I demand a full and complete accountability for wrongs and abuses that have occurred, the American people gave a mandate to investigate and root the corruption out of our system and that's what the President wants to see done.

Trump's claims of grievance are really interesting given that he just confessed none of this is justified.

The confession comes in Trump's recently dismissed lawsuit against the NYT (he has said he'll refile it within the 28 deadline that Judge Steven Merryday set).

Trump sued about one book and three articles:

- Russ Buettner and Susanne Craig's book, *Lucky Loser*, about how Trump doesn't have the talent his corrupt father had. (The book just came out in paperback in the US, which surely explains the timing of the lawsuit.)
- This story, based on the book, describing how much work the Apprentice had to do to make Trump look like a successful businessman.
- This story repeating John Kelly's warnings that Trump would rule as a dictator.
- This article from Peter Baker summarizing Trump's lifetime of corruption.

As I noted last year when Trump first threatened to file this lawsuit, "The [Baker] story was remarkable e[s]pecially by Baker's terms – he has a history of pulling his punches with Presidents." One premise of the story is that, "Trump makes a point of not admitting misdeeds or mistakes." It catalogued many of them:

- His multiple business failures
- His affairs with Karen McDougal and Stormy Daniels
- His adverse civil judgement in the E Jean Carroll case
- How little he paid in taxes
- How much money his Dad gave him
- The number of "contractors, bankers, business partners, customers and competitors" he stiffed
- Trump Organization's tax fraud
- That "Mr. Mueller concluded that the Russians did interfere on Mr. Trump's behalf"
- The 10 instances Mueller laid out where trump may have committed obstruction
- The ways in which he monetized the presidency
- The way in which Trump extorted Zelenskyy "to deliver dirt on Mr. Biden, a political rival"
- His abuse of pardons, including " figures who he

might have had reason to fear would turn against him by talking with prosecutors”

- “His concerted effort to overturn the 2020 election that he lost so that he could hold onto power despite the will of the voters”
- That Trump refused to give back the classified documents he took when he left

A whole section of the story focuses on the way in which Trump weaponized government against his adversaries.

Time and again, he publicly pressed his attorneys general – first Jeff Sessions and then William P. Barr – to prosecute Democrats or government officials who angered him. At various times, he called for the prosecution of Mr. Biden, Ms. Clinton and former President Barack Obama and lashed out when advisers resisted.

He grew particularly obsessed with prosecuting certain people, like former Secretary of State John Kerry.

[snip]

Angered that Mr. Bolton had criticized him, Mr. Trump pressured the Justice Department to block his former aide from publishing his book.

[snip]

Mr. Trump tried to put so many people who irritated him in the cross hairs of the legal system that it is hard to maintain a thorough list. He wanted

prosecutors to investigate Mr. Comey as well as Andrew G. McCabe, his acting successor, and other F.B.I. officials who participated in the Russia investigation, including Peter Strzok and Lisa Page.

[snip]

He also sought to use his power to help specific companies he favored and penalize those that angered him. He told aides to instruct the Justice Department to block the merger of Time Warner with AT&T, which would include the CNN network, one of the biggest thorns in his side.

But none of that is in the lawsuit. The only three things in the story that Trump claims are defamation in the lawsuit are:

- A reference to Trump borrowing a Military Academy friend's jacket, laden with medals, to wear in his yearbook photo
- Mary Trump's claim that Trump cheated on his SATs
- A description that Trump was investigated for mafia ties and serving as a money laundering vehicle

That's it!!!

Effectively, in a 80-page rant, Trump offered no hint that any of the rest of those things, including Baker's description of how Trump himself weaponized DOJ and government against his adversaries, were untrue.

This is a point NYT attorney David McCraw made last year when telling Trump to get stuffed.

Tellingly, your letter does not dispute – nor could it – the remainder of the article and its lengthy recitation of the legal problems, financial failures, and misdeeds of Mr. Trump.

Between last year's threatened lawsuit and when Trump filed just over a week ago, Trump upped his ante. Last year, he claimed these stories had done \$10 billion in damage to his fragile reputation. Last week, he demanded \$15 billion. (Last year, he claimed his personal brand was worth just \$15 billion, whereas last week, he claimed it was worth \$100 billion, which raises real questions about how much damage these stories could have done!!)

So in effect, Trump is demanding a \$5 billion premium to confess that *he's* actually the one who weaponized government against his adversaries.