

THREE THINGS: SHOCKER, BADGER, VAPOR

Summer doldrums are hitting hard here; it's too steamy today to do much but watch the garden grow and the 'hot takes' bloom. Let's breeze through these.

~ 1 ~

Shocker: The White House had its ass handed to it last night, alongside a serving of vanilla ice cream and peach cobbler. While it was kissing up to some *über* conservative Senators, Utah's Mike Lee and Kansas' Jerry Moran [announced they would not support the Motion to Proceed](#) on the latest POS edition of AHCA.

Excellent work on the dual tweets dispatched simultaneously at 8:30 p.m., by the way (see [this one](#) and [this one](#)). Live by the tweets, die by the tweets, Littlehands.

What I find particularly interesting is the secrecy this announcement revealed. Not just the discreet collaboration between two senators from very red states, taking advantage of the additional time afforded them by John McCain's personal health care challenge. Apparently Senate Majority Leader Mitch "Yertle" McConnell has had [such a tight grip](#) on the legislative process that even his wingman, John Cornyn, doesn't know what's going on until McConnell's office emails his deputies.

Not exactly a way to win friends and influence enemies, that.

(For some reason McConnell's super-secret hyper control makes me [think of the compartments](#) Washington Post wrote about with regard to the Russian election hacks and the subsequent investigation. Why is that?)

~ 2 ~

Badger: Russia is pissed off about its [dachas](#)-away-from-home, [threatening retaliation](#) if they're not returned. Uh, right. Like the U.S. suddenly decided to boot Russian occupants out of the Long Island and Maryland digs for no good reason last year. Russian Foreign Ministry "reserves the right to retaliate based on the principle of reciprocity," forgetting that Obama took a too-measured response to repeated incursions by Russia into U.S. information systems – including hacks of the White House and Defense Department in 2015 – not to mention the '[Illegals Program](#)' spy who worked at Microsoft circa 2010. (Let's also not forget an 'Illegals Program' spy worked their way close to Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign co-chair.) The U.S. could and should have been far more aggressive in its response; Russia isn't entitled to reciprocity.

This is a test for Congressional Republicans. Either cement sanctions against Russia including the 'foreclosure' on these two compounds, or admit complicity in the undermining of democratic process last year. The GOP needs to revisit a [CRS report on U.S.-Russia relations](#) and Executive Orders 13660, 13661, and 13662 before they give any ground. *[EDIT: See also EO 13964, issued April 1, 2016 in response to "malicious cyberactivity" – this EO the GOP will probably ignore just as it has all signs of Team Trump collusion as well as Russian interference in the 2016 general election.]*

If there are truly compelling reasons in the nation's interest for conceding these compounds, give them back – but only after the buildings have been razed and permits for reconstruction are denied under sanctions. The Russian government can work out of trailers on the property, or on boats from the dock. They do not need to be any more comfortable than they have been.

~ 3 ~

Vapor: No longer a ghost – we now know who the eighth attendee was at Donnie Junior's June 9th

meeting at Trump Tower last year. Lucky number seven is believed to be a translator – and wow, so is number eight!

Which seems kind of odd – in the information Junior dumped online, there was no mention that Veselnitskaya didn't speak English and needed a translator, or who would be the translator. Doesn't it seem strange that there would be no concerns about security clearance into Trump Tower or a meeting with a presidential candidate's son and/or campaign team given the meeting requester was a foreign national?

Perhaps because there was little concern, Body Number Eight, Ike Kaveladze, purportedly showed up as Veselnitskaya's translator only to learn she had brought her own, Body Number Seven, Anatoli Samochornov. It's not clear from [USA Today's reporting](#) who asked Kaveladze to attend; did Junior just let any Russian in the neighborhood attend the meeting? Aras Agalarov sent Kaveladze "just to make sure it happened and to serve as an interpreter if necessary," [Kaveladze's lawyer told NYT](#). Why so many witnesses?

The room must have been a little crowded with Junior, Jared Kushner, Paul Manafort, Rob Goldstone, Veselnitskaya and two translators as well as Rinat Akhmetshin.

Given the two translators, Akhmetshin's presence seems even more curious. Why was he there if there were two translators?

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That's that. I could go on but it's too damned hot here. Refresh your iced tea and settle yourself in front of the fan. This is an open thread – behave.