

BILL BARR'S ENTIRE DOJ CHASED TRUMP CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND PLOTTED INAPPROPRIATELY

When Bill Barr resigned rather than do the President's bidding to challenge elections that were perfectly fair, he could have revealed that fact publicly, okayed the indictment of one of the chief purveyors of election conspiracies, Rudy Giuliani, and admitted that the entire basis for undermining the prosecution of Mike Flynn – who had already called for martial law and an election do-over – was based on conspiracy theories spun by the same woman spinning the worst election hoaxes, Sidney Powell.

He didn't do that.

Instead, he announced his resignation with a page of abject sycophancy that repeated the conspiracy theory that got Barr hired: that the Russian investigation was, "an effort to cripple, if not oust, your Administration with frenzied and baseless accusations of collusion with Russia."

Even before that, though, Barr launched his letter with an ambiguous statement about the election, one that might be read either as endorsing Trump's conspiracy theories or debunking them:

I appreciate the opportunity to update you this afternoon on the Department's review of voter fraud allegations in the 2020 election and how these allegations will continue to be pursued. At a time when the country is so deeply divided, it is incumbent on all levels of government, and all agencies acting within their purview, to do all we can

to assure the integrity of elections and promote public confidence in their outcome.

At a moment where he had maximal power to halt Trump's efforts to overturn an election, then, Barr instead just cowered, resting on the one public statement that there was not sufficient fraud to overturn the election that had gotten him ousted.

Which is to say that to the end, Barr never foreswore the conspiracy theories he adopted in service to Donald Trump.

Now, however, others who also facilitated Donald Trump's conspiracy theories for years until they, in the final days, didn't, are seeding stories to suggest that Jeffrey Bossert Clark was in any way unique for doing so.

The story starts with a tale that suggests the top leaders in a DOJ that had broken all norms in service of Donald Trump weren't, themselves, in the "Trumpist faction" of the Republican Party.

It was New Year's Eve, but the Justice Department's top leaders had little to celebrate as they admonished Jeffrey Clark, the acting head of the civil division, for repeatedly pushing them to help President Donald J. Trump undo his electoral loss.

Huddled in the department's headquarters, they rebuked him for secretly meeting with Mr. Trump, even as the department had rebuffed the president's outlandish requests for court filings and special counsels, according to six people with knowledge of the meeting. No official would host a news conference to say that federal fraud investigations cast the results in doubt, they told him. No one would send a letter making such claims to Georgia lawmakers.

When the meeting ended not long before midnight, Acting Attorney General Jeffrey A. Rosen thought the matter had been settled, never suspecting that his subordinate would secretly discuss the plan for the letter with Mr. Trump, and very nearly take Mr. Rosen's job, as part of a plot with the president to wield the department's power to try to alter the Georgia election outcome.

It was clear that night, though, that Mr. Clark – with his willingness to entertain conspiracy theories about voting booth hacks and election fraud – was not the establishment lawyer they thought him to be. Some senior department leaders had considered him quiet, hard-working and detail-oriented. Others said they knew nothing about him, so low was his profile. He struck neither his fans in the department nor his detractors as being part of the Trumpist faction of the party, according to interviews.

The department's senior leaders were shocked when Mr. Clark's machinations came to light. They have spent recent weeks debating how he came to betray Mr. Rosen, his biggest champion at the department, and what blend of ambition and conviction led him to reject the results of the election and embrace Mr. Trump's claims, despite all evidence to the contrary, including inside the department itself. [my emphasis]

You'll note that the NYT didn't explain why it granted six surely very powerful people, mostly lawyers, anonymity to spin this tale?

Buried much deeper in the story, however, after retelling all the ways Clark broke normal procedure while running the Environmental Division, the NYT then explains how he came to be Acting head of the Civil Department and in

that role took a number of inexcusable steps that neither Bill Barr nor Jeffrey Rosen objected to (indeed, those may have been the steps that drove Jody Hunt away and won Clark the job).

While Mr. Clark oversaw environmental cases, sometimes working late into the night and personally reviewing briefs, the department's civil division was in turmoil. Its leader, Jody Hunt, sometimes clashed with the White House Counsel's Office and, later on, with Attorney General William P. Barr, over how best to defend the administration.

Mr. Hunt resigned with no warning in July, leaving his deputy to run the division while Mr. Barr and Mr. Rosen searched for an acting leader among the department's thinned-out ranks. Mr. Clark wanted the job, which was a considerable step up in stature, and Mr. Rosen supported the idea even though he was already a division head, according to three people with knowledge of the situation.

After he took the helm of the civil division in September, colleagues began seeing flashes of unusual behavior. Mr. Clark's name appeared on eyebrow-raising briefs, including what would turn out to be an unsuccessful effort to inject the government into a defamation lawsuit against Mr. Trump by a woman who has said he raped her more than two decades ago. He also signed onto an attempt to use the Justice Department to sue a former friend of the first lady at the time, Melania Trump, for writing a tell-all memoir.

Remember: the currently operative story is that Clark *didn't know* Trump until Congressman Scott Perry introduced them, presumably after the election.

It was Mr. Perry, a member of the hard-line Freedom Caucus, who first made Mr. Trump aware that a relatively obscure Justice Department official, Jeffrey Clark, the acting chief of the civil division, was sympathetic to Mr. Trump's view that the election had been stolen, according to former administration officials who spoke with Mr. Clark and Mr. Trump.

Mr. Perry introduced the president to Mr. Clark, whose openness to conspiracy theories about election fraud presented Mr. Trump with a welcome change from the acting attorney general, Jeffrey A. Rosen, who stood by the results of the election and had repeatedly resisted the president's efforts to undo them.

He didn't get the Civil job because Trump picked him or because he promised to turn DOJ into Trump's own personal law firm. Someone else must have picked him. That means Clark's other decisions – one of which he took the day after he was installed and which were "Trumpist" by any definition of the term – had the full approval of the people now suggesting he went rogue later in the year. Indeed, those interventions may have been the entire reason he got picked to run the Civil Division.

Sure, Jeffrey Bossert Clark should be shunned in the respectable legal profession for helping Trump attempt a coup. But so should the men who willfully let DOJ champion Trump's conspiracy theories for the two years before that.