

## **FBI PUBLIC AFFAIRS – DIRECTOR’S AM NEWS BRIEFING**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2019 5:00 AM EST**

**Trump Lashes Out At Mueller Probe As Democrats Vow To Make Report Public.** In a [tweet](#) Sunday morning, President Trump lashed out at special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation, asserting that Hillary Clinton and the DNC engaged in the only collusion with Russia that occurred during the 2016 campaign. Trump wrote, “The only Collusion with the Russians was with Crooked Hillary Clinton and the Democratic National Committee...And, where’s the Server that the DNC refused to give to the FBI? Where are the new Texts between Agent Lisa Page and her Agent lover, Peter S? We want them now!”

Trump’s tweet came as Democratic lawmakers argued on the Sunday talk shows that Mueller’s report should be made public. The [AP](#) (2/24, Jalonick, Yen) reports, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Schiff “threatened” on [ABC’s This Week](#) “to call special counsel Robert Mueller to Capitol Hill, subpoena documents and sue the Trump administration if the full report on Mueller’s Russia investigation is not made public.” Schiff “said his committee will keep close watch” Attorney General Barr to see if he will “to try to bury any part of this report.” In addition, Schiff said he would “take it to court if necessary.” Schiff said if there is not complete disclosure Barr will be left with “a tarnished legacy.” The [Washington Times](#) (2/24, Richardson, 544K) says Schiff “made it clear he would do whatever necessary to make the findings public.”

[USA Today](#) (2/24, Hayes, 12.61M) says Democrats “have grown increasingly skeptical over whether the results of the investigation will be made public and are ramping up a plan to make sure the public will see the results.” Schiff told ABC “that he and other Democrats have a host of plans to fight for a full disclosure of the report.” Said Schiff, “In the end, I think the department understands that they’re going to have to make this public.”

[The Hill](#) (2/24, Samuels, 3.27M) says Democrats on Sunday “framed the conclusion of Mueller’s nearly two-year investigation as a crucial moment for transparency.” Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), a 2020 presidential candidate, told [CNN’s Inside Politics](#). “This is an extraordinary moment in terms of the need that the special counsel has to investigate the conduct of the president of the United States’s campaign and issues surrounding it. ... I believe that given in particular all the misinformation that we can, I think, rightly believe we’ve heard, that it is important that the American public receive as much information and that we be as transparent as possible. ... So I am an advocate for transparency. I am an advocate for a public report. And certainly that we in the United States Congress would receive all of the supporting information, be it in a classified hearing or not.”

On [CBS’ Face The Nation](#) (2/24, 3.76M), Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) said, “The responsibility to make sure that there was not a compromise of the presidential election of 2016. If the Attorney General takes the Mueller report and then sanitizes it and releases that as the answer to a comprehensive investigation, then I think the Democrats in the House and Senate along with Republicans have a responsibility to ensure that the American people know what happened in 2016. ... Right now everything rides on that Mueller report, and the attorney general, William Barr, not sanitizing it in a way that is not transparent to the public and the Congress, but Democrats have a responsibility to do that job.”

The [Washington Post](#) (2/24, Sonmez, 14.71M) says Democrats “are seeking to ramp up pressure” on Barr “to release the full findings of the report – and setting down a marker for what course they will take if he doesn’t,” while [Reuters](#) (2/24, Gibson) reports Democrats “hope to use the Mueller report as the basis for any further investigations into Trump, including whether they would initiate impeachment proceedings.”

According to the [New York Times](#) (2/24, Cochrane, 17.89M), it is “unclear how successful efforts to subpoena Mr. Mueller would be.” Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told [CBS’ Face The Nation](#) (2/24, 3.76M), “I don’t know that you can.” Blunt “declined to say whether his committee would also ask Mr. Mueller to testify.” Blunt said, “I think we’ll have to wait and see what’s in the report.” The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/24, Jamerson, Subscription Publication, 6.65M) reports Blunt said the Senate Intelligence Committee’s investigation is ongoing and would like be completed and would likely conclude after Mueller finishes his report.

Senate Judiciary Chairman Graham said on [Fox News Sunday Morning Futures](#) (2/24, 1.46M), “Under the regulation, the Attorney General has to report to me and the ranking member, Dianne Feinstein, a summary of what was found, who is going to be pursued criminally if anybody at all. He doesn’t have to give us the entire report, but my belief is that collusion really is conspiracy, and nobody has been charged with a crime of conspiracy. Everybody who’s been charged has been process crimes, or financial crimes, so my belief is that there is no collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russians, and if there had been, somebody would have been charged by now with the conspiracy.” Graham added that Mueller “The Mueller report will be out soon. If there is no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian intelligence community, then that should be the end of all this.”

Jonathan Martin of the New York Times said on [CNN's Inside Politics](#) (2/24, 653K), "I tend to think that if there is real news from the Mueller report and that if...at some point and the House becomes an impeachment inquiry, that's going to penetrate throughout the country and the Washington conversation will, in fact, travel beyond the beltway. I think right now we're just not there yet because, let's be honest, there's been such a barrage of news and information about everything Trump and Mueller, various indictments and, you know, leaks. But there's not been a sort of major step like the opening of impeachment articles."

CNN senior White House correspondent Jeff Zeleny said on [CNN's Inside Politics](#) (2/24, 653K), "It's also a question of how much these Democratic presidential candidates want to spend their time on this. Is that the path to the White House for senator Harris or some others? Probably not. One thing is clear. It's hard to imagine Democrats any more fired up about the idea of defeating Donald Trump. But this is certainly firing up the President's base as well. So, the more Democrats fight and push for more information about this, it's going to unify the President's base and that's what he's been trying to do all along."

[Politico](#) (2/24, Forgey, 3.67M), [CBS News](#) (2/24, Montoya-Galvez, 2.83M), the [Washington Examiner](#) (2/24, Yilek, 345K), [Axios](#) (2/23, Allen, 745K), the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Bade, 14.71M), and the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Demirjian, 14.71M) provided additional coverage.

**DOJ Official Reportedly Said Mueller's Report Will Not Be Delivered This Week.** The [CBS Evening News](#) (2/22, story 4, 0:40, Glor, 6.23M) reported, "We do have some new information tonight about when special counsel Robert Mueller will turn over his report on Russian interference in the presidential campaign." CBS (Reid) added, "Today the Justice Department issued a rare statement and confirmed that they do not expect to receive a final report from the special counsel for at least another 10 days. House Democrats also sent a letter to the Attorney General demanding that when he receives this report, that he release as much as possible, even though legally he's not required to release anything."

[NBC Nightly News](#) (2/22, story 5, 0:55, Holt, 9.56M) reported, "Late tonight, a senior Justice Department official tells NBC News that the much-anticipated Mueller report is not expected to be released to the Attorney General while President Trump is overseas next week." NBC (Jackson) added, "This means the Washington waiting game goes on at least a little longer. And today President Trump told me he has not talked with his Attorney General about that report's release." NBC showed Trump saying, "At some point I guess I'll be talking about it, but you know the nice part? There was no collusion, there was no obstruction, there was no anything. So, that's the nice part."

Citing a "senior Justice Department official," [CNBC](#) (2/22, Higgins, 4.51M) reported that special counsel Robert Mueller "will not deliver a report to the attorney general next week, as was previously reported by multiple outlets." According to CNBC, Attorney General Barr had been "preparing to announce the completion of Mueller's investigation...as soon as next week," according to CNBC.

[Reuters](#) (2/22, Lynch, Hosenball) also cited an unnamed "senior U.S. Justice Department official" saying, "Any reports that the Special Counsel's report will be delivered to the DOJ (Department of Justice) during the week of Feb. 28 are incorrect."

The [New York Times](#) (2/22, Benner, 17.89M) reported that the Justice Department will "receive a final accounting from Robert S. Mueller III," but, it added, "there is no guarantee that the public will ever see that full report." The attorney general is required to "send a summary of that work to Congress," but has, said the Times, "considerable flexibility as to how much detail he provides to Congress and the public."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (2/22, Megerian, 4.55M) reported, "Mueller's unremitting silence and the little-used federal law under which he operates have left deep uncertainty about what lies ahead."

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/22, Gurman, Viswanatha, Subscription Publication, 6.65M) and [NBC News](#) (2/22, 5.1M) provided additional coverage.

**AP Analysis: Mueller Has Made Report Public Through Court Records.** An [AP](#) (2/24, Day, Tucker) analysis says that while Mueller "has made not a single public comment since his appointment in May 2017," he "has spoken loudly, if indirectly, in court – indictment by indictment, guilty plea by guilty plea. In doing so, he tracked an elaborate Russian operation that injected chaos into a U.S. presidential election and tried to help Trump win the White House." According to the AP, "Woven through thousands of court papers, the special counsel has made his public report."

**Bump: Mueller's Report Is "To Some Significant Degree, Already Out."** Philip Bump writes in the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Bump, 14.71M) that "President Trump has benefited enormously from the frog-in-hot-water nature of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's investigation" meaning that indictments have been released from time to time rather than "working in quiet for 20 months," and then "suddenly produc[ing] a dozen indictments and plea deals running into hundreds of pages." Bump adds that so far, Mueller has released "about 290 pages of documents detailing alleged and admitted illegal behavior," in what he calls "a broad description of criminal activity that overlaps at only one point: Involvement in the 2016 election." He acknowledges that "little...involved criminal activity directly related to the campaign." Bump concludes by saying, "Mueller's report is, to some significant degree, already out."

Asha Rangappa, a senior lecturer at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, writes in the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Rangappa, 14.71M), that as Mueller's investigation concludes, "key figures...such as Jared Kushner and Donald Trump Jr., would appear to be off the hook." But, adds Rangappa, the end of the Mueller investigation may clear "the path for criminal charges in multiple states." Rangappa adds that "Mueller was reportedly sharing information he had gathered with the then-attorney general of New York," who has "sued the Trump Foundation," and "the New Jersey attorney general issued a subpoena to Trump's campaign for the financial records of his inaugural fund."

**Bannon Says Democrats Trying To Weaponize Mueller's Findings.** The [CBS Weekend News](#) (2/24, story 3, 0:55, Begnaud, 54.71M) reported the President's "former strategist Steve Bannon accused Democrats trying to weaponize the forthcoming findings." Bannon: "I think that 2019 will be the most vitriolic year in American politics since before the Civil War, and I include Vietnam in that." The [New York Post](#) (2/24, Schultz, 4.88M) reports Bannon told CBS, "I think the next 90 days to four months is going to be a real meat grinder."

**Analysis: Mueller's Report Likely To Take "A Legalistic Middle Ground."** [CQ Roll Call](#) (2/22, Shapiro, 159K) discussed what form special counsel Robert Mueller's final report could take, speculating that the "likely outcome is a legalistic middle ground that explains Mueller's prosecutorial decisions and offers a roadmap for future proceedings against the president and his closest advisers, including family members." Roll Call predicts that, "Unless Mueller's findings are unequivocal, prudence may call for House Democrats to hold lengthy investigative hearings to build an ironclad case for removing the president from office."

**Cohen Reportedly Met With Prosecutors To Discuss The Trump Organization.** The [New York Times](#) (2/22, Protes, Rashbaum, Haberman, 17.89M) reported former Trump attorney Michael D. Cohen "met last month with federal prosecutors in Manhattan, offering information about possible irregularities within the president's family business and about a donor to the inaugural committee." The unnamed sources said that Cohen "spoke with the prosecutors about insurance claims the company had filed over the years." The account, says the Times, "suggests that they are interested in broader aspects of the Trump Organization, beyond their investigation into the company's role in the hush money payments made before the 2016 election to women claiming to have had affairs with Mr. Trump." The donor in question, added the Times, is "Imaad Zuberi, a California venture capitalist and political fund-raiser."

**Cohen To Testify To Congress Wednesday.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/23, story 6, 1:20, Llamas, 5.37M) reported, "The high-stakes hearing set for next week on Capitol Hill. President Trump's longtime fixer and personal lawyer expected to pull back the curtain on some of the President's business dealings, even as the President makes his own headlines overseas." ABC (Palmeri) added, "ABC News confirming a New York Times report that Cohen has told prosecutors about insurance issues within the Trump Organization."

**Mueller's Team Formally Denies Stone's Claims That The Feds Tipped Off CNN.** [Politico](#) (2/22, Gerstein, 3.67M) reported special counsel Robert Mueller's team made a court filing Friday "formally denying Roger Stone's claims that journalists got early access to his indictment last month." In a footnote to the filing, prosecutors wrote, "The Special Counsel's Office is aware of no information indicating that reporters were given any advance knowledge of a possible indictment from the Special Counsel's Office." [Newsweek](#) (2/22, Hutzler, 2.69M) reported Mueller's office "added that Stone provided 'no information to contradict the public statements' of CNN, in which the media organization said it had no prior knowledge that the arrest was going to take place."

**Strzok And Page: "Insurance Policy" Text Referred To Potentially Burning A Source.** The [Daily Caller](#) (2/22, 645K) reported that former FBI official Peter Strzok and former FBI lawyer Lisa Page both "told Congress that a text they exchanged referring to an 'insurance policy' against a Trump presidency was a reference to a discussion about potentially 'burning' a longtime FBI source in the event of an aggressive investigation of the Trump campaign." According to the Daily Caller, the two "told lawmakers that they and FBI officials were concerned that ramping up an investigation of the Trump campaign might expose the source and undercut future Russia-related investigations." The Daily Caller said "neither Strzok nor Page identified the source, but only three individuals, former British spy Christopher Steele, former Australian diplomat Alexander Downer and former Cambridge professor Stefan Halper, have been publicly identified as sources for the FBI in the Russia probe."

**Mueller's Sentencing Memo Says Manafort "Repeatedly And Brazenly" Broke The Law.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/23, story 7, 1:05, Llamas, 5.37M) reported, "Tonight, special counsel Robert Mueller's office filing a massive 800-page sentencing memo for the President's former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, claiming he 'repeatedly and brazenly' broke the law for over a decade, even while on bail. The memo does not recommend a specific sentence, but said 'Manafort presents many aggravating sentencing factors and no warranted mitigating factors.' The President confidant Mueller's final report will clear him." Said President Trump, "The nice part? There was no collusion. There was no obstruction. There was no anything. So, I look forward to seeing the report. If it's an honest report, it will say that." ABC (Palmeri) added, "President

Trump has repeatedly expressed sympathy for Paul Manafort, and now the New York Times reporting that the Manhattan District Attorney is filing additional criminal charges against Manafort to ensure that he faces some jail time."

The [CBS Weekend News](#) (2/23, story 2, 1:15, Ninan, 3.35M) reported, "Special counsel prosecutors unleashed words of fury about President Trump's former campaign chair, Paul Manafort," in the memo. CBS (Killion) added, "In a newly unsealed memo, the special counsel's office didn't mince words," saying, "For over decade, Manafort repeatedly and brazenly violated the law."

[NBC Nightly News](#) (2/23, story 3, 2:05, Diaz-Balart, 5.49M) reported, "Mueller's prosecutors alleging Manafort continued to break the law even after being indicted." NBC (O'Donnell) added, "Today, the office of special counsel laid out a damning portrait of former Trump campaign chief Paul Manafort." But, said NBC, "notably, no bombshell surprises. The Mueller team sheds no new light on Manafort's interactions during the Trump campaign with his longtime associate Konstantin Kilimnik, who is linked to Russian intelligence, or any other evidence of conspiracy in the campaign."

The [New York Times](#) (2/23, Lafraniere, 17.89M) reports in the memo, the prosecutors "portrayed Paul Manafort, President Trump's former campaign chairman, as a hardened, remorseless criminal." The Times adds that it "painted a damning portrait of Mr. Manafort." The memo said that Manafort deceived "tax preparers, bookkeepers, banks, the Treasury Department, the Department of Justice national security division, the F.B.I., the special counsel's office, the grand jury, his own legal counsel, members of Congress and members of the executive branch of the United States government."

The [AP](#) (2/23, Day, Tucker) reports the memo said that Manafort's offenses reached "the heart of the criminal justice system." The AP adds that the memo "is likely the last major filing by prosecutors as Manafort heads into his sentencing hearings next month and as Mueller's investigation approaches a conclusion." The AP in the last sentence, says, "Manafort hasn't been accused of involvement in Russian election interference."

The [Washington Post](#) (2/23, Weiner, 14.71M) reports the memo has been "made partially public," and the "redacted" report "gives no details about Manafort's campaign interactions with Russians."

[Reuters](#) (2/23, Layne) reports the memo's recommendation "increases the likelihood that Manafort will spend the rest of his life behind bars."

[Bloomberg](#) (2/23, Voreacos, Harris, 5.38M) reports Manafort "confessed that he conspired with Konstantin Kilimnik...to tamper with witnesses."

***Kilimnik Profiled As Among Most Interesting Figures In Mueller Investigation.*** The [New York Times](#) (2/23, Vogel, Kramer, 17.89M) reports that in the Mueller investigation, "few figures seem to have offered more tantalizing leads than Konstantin V. Kilimnik." The Times describes him as "a diminutive, multilingual political operative" who "has continued to attract intense interest from prosecutors for his interactions with his longtime boss and mentor, Paul Manafort, and his suspected ties to Russian intelligence." The Times says that Kilimnik was given polling data from the Trump campaign "as Russia was beginning a social media operation intended to help Mr. Trump's campaign."

***Mueller's Prosecutors Recommend Harsh Punishment for Manafort.*** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/24, Viswanatha, Subscription Publication, 6.65M) reports a sentencing memo from special counsel Robert Mueller's prosecutors unsealed Saturday calls for a harsh punishment for former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort. Manafort is expected to respond to the memo Monday.

***Manhattan DA Reportedly Planning To Indict Manafort.*** The [New York Times](#) (2/22, Rashbaum, 17.89M) reported the Manhattan district attorney's office is "preparing state criminal charges against" Paul Manafort "in an effort to ensure he will still face prison time even if the president pardons him for his federal crimes." According to the Times, "The office of the Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance Jr., first began investigating Mr. Manafort in 2017 in connection with loans he received from two banks," which "were also the subject of some of the counts in the federal indictment that led to his conviction last year." The Times says Vance's office is "expected to seek charges whether or not the president pardons" Manafort.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/22, story 7, 0:25, Muir, 8.84M) reported, "The New York Times is reporting that the Manhattan DA is now preparing state criminal charges against him [Manafort] involving bank loans." ABC added, "The Times now reporting that the Manhattan DA wants to make sure that Manafort will face the possibility of prison time even if the President pardons him."

[Reuters](#) (2/22, Freifeld, Layne) cited "a person familiar with the matter" in reporting, "the Manhattan district attorney is pursuing criminal charges against Paul Manafort...whether or not Trump pardons him for his federal convictions." The unnamed source said that "the charges originate from unpaid state taxes and likely are also related to loans."

***McCabe Says He Is "Speaking Truth To Power" In Book.*** The [Washington Times](#) (2/24, Richardson, 544K) reports former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe "insisted" in an interview with [ABC's This Week](#) (2/24, 2.72M) that with his book about the Administration, he is "speaking truth to power." Asked "about the latest round of insults leveled by President

Trump," McCabe said, "It's unfortunate that this is getting a little bit routine. But I will say that I don't think there's anything sad or unfortunate about speaking truth to power and telling the story that you lived and the things you saw and heard and the reasons behind the decisions you made." The Times says McCabe's comments "prompt[ed] a round of eye-rolling from Republicans," who were "quick to point out that Mr. McCabe was fired last year for lack of candor and remains under federal investigation over whether he lied under oath about his role in unauthorized media leaks." Likewise, the [Huffington Post](#) (2/24, Russo, 2.78M) reports McCabe "is engaging in an all-out war of words" with Trump.

**Rivkin, Casey: McCabe's 25th Amendment Claim Should Be Investigated.** In an op-ed for the [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/24, Subscription Publication, 6.65M), David B. Rivkin Jr. and Lee A. Casey, who served in the White House Counsel's Office and Justice Department under Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush, argue that McCabe's claim that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein brought up the idea of using the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office should be fully investigated.

**Bromwich: McCabe Will Sue The Justice Department Over His Firing.** [CBS News](#) (2/22, 2.83M) reported attorney Michael Bromwich, who represents former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, said Thursday that a criminal investigation into whether his client made false statements during an internal probe is "ongoing." Bromwich said, "We've had dealings with the U.S. attorney's office. ... We are in continuing communication with them." Bromwich also "said Thursday that McCabe will soon sue the Justice Department over his firing."

**McCabe Breaks With Schiff Over Whether Precedent Set In Clinton Emails Case.** The [Washington Examiner](#) (2/24, Yilek, 345K) reports former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe broke with House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA) on Sunday over whether the FBI "set a precedent in turning over evidence in the investigation into Hillary Clinton's unauthorized private email server." According to the article, "Schiff argued the Justice Department must release special counsel Robert Mueller's final report on the Russia investigation, no matter what the evidence shows, because it released materials in the Clinton case, despite prosecutors not bringing charges." However, McCabe said, "I'm not sure that [former FBI Director James Comey's] decision to announce it in July is a precedent. ... However, I think that it is a very concerning and now recent precedent the volume of information that the FBI turned over to Congress in the wake of, after the investigation was concluded."

**Tracey: Reaction To McCabe's Claims Fall "Along Tedious Partisan Lines."** Michael Tracey argued in a piece for the [New York Daily News](#) (2/22, Tracey, 2.2M) that "reaction to McCabe's extraordinary claims have fallen along tedious partisan lines." Tracey wrote, "For anyone hoping that McCabe would reveal some super-secret intelligence that backs up his theory of Trump being compromised by Russia, the book tour has been a disappointment. McCabe has repeatedly denied that any such non-public intel exists. Instead, he has cited Trump's tweets. That's right: the tweets. It's an incredibly flimsy premise on which to base a counter-intelligence investigation of such explosive magnitude, and sets a harrowing precedent. With the FBI's well-documented history of severe overreach in domestic political affairs, both Democrats and Republicans should set aside the petty partisan wrangling and start to seriously examine what really happened here."

**Trump Says "It's A Shame" About Coast Guard Lt. Arrested For Planning Attacks.** The [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Rucker, 14.71M) reports on Friday, President Trump "commented for the first time" on the arrest of "US Coast Guard lieutenant and self-identified white nationalist" Christopher P. Hasson, "on suspicions of plotting an attack against Democratic politicians and journalists." Trump said, "I think it's a shame." He added, "I think it's a very sad thing when a thing like that happens. I've expressed that."

Jennifer Rubin writes in her column in the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Rubin, 14.71M), that "as of Friday morning, there has been deafening silence from the White House." Rubin adds, "Trump believes he is responsible for none of this (nor of the upturn in hate crimes during his presidency), but it defies logic and experience to claim that the man with the loudest bullhorn on the planet does not affect anyone's conduct."

Erik Wemple writes in the [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Wemple, 14.71M), about the case, describing Sarah Sanders' statement, in which she said, "I certainly don't think that the president at any point has done anything but condemn violence — against journalists or anyone else." as "blinding dishonesty."

**US Attorney Calls For Action To Address "Alarming Rise Of Hate Crimes."** Thomas T. Cullen, the United States attorney for the Western District of Virginia, writes in the [New York Times](#) (2/22, Cullen, 17.89M) about the case, saying that is among "several recent reminders that white supremacy and far-right extremism are among the greatest domestic-security threats facing the United States." Cullen calls for "immediate steps...to curtail the alarming rise of hate crimes and extremist violence in this country."

**Former DC Metro Officer To Be Resentenced In ISIS Case.** The [AP](#) (2/23) reports, "A former D.C. Metro police officer serving 15 years in prison for trying to help the Islamic State could see his sentence reduced after an appeals court threw

out two of his convictions." Nicholas Young "was convicted of attempting to provide material support to a terror group and two counts of obstruction of justice." A three-judge panel of the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the terror charge on Thursday, but vacated the obstruction charges, ruling that "the government failed to show that Young tried to thwart a grand jury investigation." In 2016, Young "sent \$245 in gift cards to an account he believed belonged to an ISIS fighter," but who "was actually an FBI informant."

**Judge Acquits Man Charged With Ducking Past TSA Agents At Portland, Oregon Airport.** The [Oregonian](#) (2/22, Bernstein, 889K) reports, "Following one day of trial testimony, a federal judge on Friday morning threw out a case against a 30-year-old man accused of ducking past security officials at Portland International Airport." US District Judge Marco A. Hernandez "found there was no evidence that Badr Ziti, 30, ever entered the so-called 'sterile area' of the airport and so Ziti could never be convicted of the misdemeanor charge – entering an airport area in violation of security requirements." Judge Hernandez's ruling "came just before prosecutors and Ziti, who was representing himself with a standby counsel, were set to give closing arguments to a 12-member jury." Ziti "said he believed the FBI 'got really excited' about his case, partly because he's Muslim." Prosecutors said Ziti "ducked under the security cordons, avoiding Transportation Security Administration officers checking tickets, and was stopped in the baggage and personal screening area."

**Judge Orders Administration To List Private Groups Receiving Watchlist.** The [AP](#) (2/22, Barakat) reports, "A federal magistrate on Friday ordered the government to disclose to him and to plaintiffs' attorneys a list of private organizations that receive access to the government's list of known or suspected terrorists." Judge John Anderson "issued the ruling at the conclusion of a hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria which he angrily questioned government lawyers about their failure to previously disclose that hundreds of private entities like universities and hospitals receive access to the list." According to the AP, "The government admitted earlier this month in a court filing that private groups like universities and hospitals receive access to the list, after denying in previous court hearings and depositions that they do." A government attorney "said the oversight was a mistake and there was no intention to deceive."

**American Al Qaeda Informant Says US Double-Crossed Him.** Scott Pelley reported on [CBS' 60 Minutes](#) (2/24, 98.82M) that American Bryant Viñas "joined Al Qaeda in 2008. But after he was caught, Viñas became an informant, cooperating with the FBI." According to prosecutors, Viñas "may have been the most valuable witness ever in the war on Al Qaeda. Viñas impressed prosecutors and the judge in his case so much that they prepared to shield him from the prospect of Al Qaeda's revenge by putting him in the federal witness protection program. All was prepared, until Bryant Viñas says he was double-crossed" when the Justice Department denied him witness protection. The rest of the story can be seen [here](#).

**FBI Investigating Jussie Smollett Case, As Fox Drops Him From "Empire".** The [CBS Evening News](#) (2/22, story 7, 1:50, Glor, 6.23M) reported, "The FBI is looking into the Jussie Smollett case, which could lead to more charges. The actor was charged with a felony yesterday for allegedly staging a hate attack to advance his career." CBS (Reynolds) added, "It's gone from very bad to much worse for Jussie Smollett. You can forget about the Fox statement two days ago about how Smollett was a consummate professional on the hit show 'Empire,' and how 'he is not being written out of the show,' because today he was written out of the show."

[NBC Nightly News](#) (2/22, story 4, 2:00, Holt, 9.56M) reported, "There is new fallout in the Jussie Smollett saga. The actor cut from the last two episodes of the season of his hit show 'Empire' after police say he orchestrated a fake attack on himself." NBC (Almaguer) added, "Tonight executive producers say actor Jussie Smollett is out of the final two episodes of the season following his felony charge for lying to police about a hate crime."

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/22, story 3, 1:50, Muir, 8.84M) reported, "A crush of photographers surrounding actor Jussie Smollett moments after he was charged with a felony. Authorities, who did not hide their anger, saying he faked the racist and homophobic attack against him." ABC (Pilgrim) added, "Producers of the show 'Empire' today announcing they are removing Jussie Smollett's character from the last two episodes of this season 'to avoid further disruption on the set.'"

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/22, Flint, Subscription Publication, 6.65M) also reports Smollett has been cut from the final episodes of the season.

[Reuters](#) (2/22, Cherelus) reports, "Smollett faces up to three years in prison if convicted in the case."

**Trump Jr. Compares Smollett, Blasey Ford On Twitter.** The [New York Post](#) (2/24, Lapin, 4.88M) reports, "Donald Trump Jr. made up his own Oscars category Sunday night: 'Best performance in a politically motivated hate crime hoax.'" In a [tweet](#), Trump Jr. "asked his followers to choose between the so-called nominees, lumping Jussie Smollett, who's accused of staging his own hate crime attack, with Christine Blasey Ford, who testified before the Senate that then-Supreme Court nominee

Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her when they were teens," and Nathan Phillips, "the Native American activist involved in a caught-on-camera confrontation with a group of students from Covington Catholic HS Jan. 18."

**DNC's Perez: "Hate Crimes Are On The Rise" Regardless Of Smollett Case.** DNC Chair Tom Perez, appearing on [Fox News Sunday](#) (2/24, 1.85M), discussed race and identity politics in the wake of the allegations against Smollett. Perez said, "I spent the better part of a decade under Republican and Democratic administrations as a career federal hate crimes prosecutor. I saw these cases firsthand. If the allegations that have come out in recent days are true, it's unconscionable, because hate crimes, the fact of the matter, are on the rise. And when you create a false situation, you are doing an injustice to all the people who have been victimized. ... We have the facts, [Democrats] acted on the facts as we knew at the time, and here are the facts that we know today: Hate crimes are on the rise. And in the aftermath of Charlottesville, frankly that was a layup for the President. He should have unequivocally said there is no place for this. And yet he was empowering, he was giving permission. That was wrong. And we have to understand right now the fact of the matter, hate crimes are on the rise and that should be a bipartisan issue." The [Washington Times](#) (2/24, Richardson, 544K) covers Perez's comments under the headline "Tom Perez Defends Democrats' Jussie Smollett Response." [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/24, story 11, 0:15, Llamas, 4.91M) had a brief item on the Smollett story that did not mention Perez.

**El Chapo's Defense Team To Seek New Trial As Family Seeks US Visas.** The [AP](#) (2/22) reports Juakin "El Chapo" Guzman's legal defense team "said Friday it would seek a new trial for the notorious drug lord after allegations of misconduct on the part of several jurors who allegedly followed media accounts of the case against the instructions of a federal judge." Also on Friday, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador "said that he has instructed his government to assist Guzman's family in seeking humanitarian visas to visit the convicted drug trafficker in the United States." In a letter to Lopez Obrador dated Feb. 14, El Chapo's mother, Loera Guzman, "called his extradition illegal and asked that Guzman be brought back to Mexico." Lopez Obrador "said legal questions would have to be dealt with by Mexico's interior ministry, attorney general's office and judiciary." According to the AP, however, "US support for such a request would be extremely unlikely considering Guzman has escaped from two prisons."

[USA Today](#) (2/22, McCoy, 12.61M) reports, "Guzmán attorney Eduardo Balarezo cited a Vice News report in which a juror said other members of the panel violated the repeated instructions of U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan by following news accounts of the trial on Twitter and other media outlets." USA Today adds, "For Guzmán, who gained international notoriety for twice breaking out of high-security prisons in Mexico, the effort raises the possibility of at least a temporary escape from punishment in the United States. 'Mr. Guzmán intends to file a motion for a new trial based on the disclosures in the article and to request an evidentiary hearing to determine the extent of the misconduct,' Balarezo wrote to Cogan on Friday."

[CNN](#) (2/22, Sanchez, 82.97M) reports, "The head of Mexico's murderous Sinaloa drug cartel was found guilty earlier this month of all 10 federal criminal counts against him, including a charge of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise that carries a mandatory term of life in prison." CNN adds, "Later Friday, Judge Cogan granted Balarezo's request for an extension to file a motion for a new trial. The defense team has until March 28 to file the motion, the judge ordered."

### **White House "Looking Into" Acosta's Handling Of Sexual Abuse Case While US Attorney In Miami.**

The [AP](#) (2/22) reports on Friday, White House Press Secretary Sanders said the White House is "looking into" what the AP describes as "Labor Secretary Alex Acosta's handling of a secret plea deal with a wealthy financier accused of sexually abusing dozens of underage girls." Acosta was US attorney in Miami at the time. President Trump praised Acosta for "a great job" as labor secretary, and said the case "seems like a long time ago." Sanders called it a "complicated case," and said it is "something we're certainly looking into."

The [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Paquette, 14.71M) reports that during Acosta's confirmation hearings, "Epstein's name came up 59 times." On Thursday, Sen. Ben Sasse, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Oversight Subcommittee, issued a statement saying, "The Department of Justice should use this opportunity to reopen its non-prosecution agreement so that Epstein and anyone else who abused these children are held accountable."

**Prosecutors Looking At Zinke's Decision Against Allowing Two Tribes To Open Casino In Connecticut.** The [Washington Post](#) (2/22, Eilperin, Rein, 14.71M) reports, "Prosecutors have begun presenting evidence to a grand jury in Washington in their probe of whether former interior Secretary Ryan Zinke lied to federal investigators." The focus of the evidence is "Zinke's decision not to grant a petition by two Indian tribes to operate a commercial casino in Connecticut."

**NFL Patriots Owner Kraft Identified In Prostitution Bust.** [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/24, story 9, 1:25, Llamas, 4.91M) reported that NFL Patriots football team owner Robert Kraft is expected to be charged for prostitution

solicitation after Jupiter, Florida police conducted a sting operation, which led to the identification of over 200 individuals. Jupiter Police Department Detective Andrew Sharp told reporters that the sting footage showed Kraft participating in solicitation. Kraft denied the allegations, but Florida police may "issue an arrest warrant as early as Monday."

The [CBS Weekend News](#) (2/24, story 10, 0:15, Begnaud, 54.71M) reported that Kraft has not indicated "whether he will turn himself in to Florida authorities" if the Jupiter Police Department issues a warrant for his arrest.

### **Rochester, New York City Councilman Pleads Not Guilty To Money Laundering, Fraud Charges.**

[WHEC-TV](#) Rochester, NY (2/22, 129K) reports that Rochester, New York City Councilman Adam McFadden "pleaded not guilty Friday morning to charges of money laundering and wire fraud." According to WHEC-TV, federal prosecutors "charged him and the former Chairman of the Rochester Housing Authority Board George Moses with wire fraud and money laundering." Prosecutors "allege McFadden and Moses cheated RHA out of thousands of dollars." WHEC-TV adds, "According to federal documents, McFadden set up a company that was supposed to provide a list of services to the Rochester Housing Charities which were never performed, yet his company was paid more than \$85,000 by the RHA." US Attorney James Kennedy "says this happened during the time of McFadden was executive director of the RHA and after, starting in October 2014 to December 2015."

### **Taylor, Michigan Police Officer Suspended, Mayor's Aide Quits As FBI Corruption Probe Widens.**

The [Detroit News](#) (2/22, Snell, Rahal, 719K) reports that Taylor, Michigan Mayor Rick Sollars' chief of staff "is leaving his post and a police officer has been suspended following a raid on the mayor's office this week by FBI agents investigating public corruption." FBI agents "also are investigating whether a contractor whose home and office was raided Tuesday helped renovate the mayor's lakefront chalet in Lenawee County, sources told The News." According to the News, "New threads of the investigation surfaced Friday, three days after FBI agents raided Taylor City Hall, the mayor's home and chalet, and the house and office of city contractor Shady Awad." The News adds, "No charges have been filed as investigators sift through documents and other evidence seized during raids and try to determine whether public officials received bribes and kickbacks for awarding contracts."

[Deadline Detroit](#) (2/23, Lengel) reports "The FBI is trying to determine whether public officials received bribes and kickbacks for awarding contracts," and "one area of concern of the FBI is whether a contractor whose home and office was raided Tuesday helped renovate the mayor's lakefront chalet in Lenawee County."

**FBI Actively Recruiting For Special Agents.** The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/24, Viswanatha, Tau, Subscription Publication, 6.65M) reports the FBI, in a rare move, is beginning an aggressive recruitment of usually highly desired special agent positions. In 2009, there were 68,500 applicants for the positions; last year, there were just 11,500. The FBI has also been under pressure after a series of politically sensitive investigations.

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