

# The Columbus Dispatch

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Opinion

## Jay Ambrose: Investigation puts Mueller's own integrity in doubt

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When Robert Mueller is out to get you, he will get you. Nothing is going to stop this special counsel, and so he and his team plotted out something like 48 questions for him to ask President Donald Trump in a White House session, and there's a worry — especially for Trump, a champion bumble-tongue, it would be a perjury trap, some lawyers have noted, and so what if he refuses?

Well, we know what. Just as those 48 gotcha questions were somehow leaked to the press, it also got leaked that Mueller told Trump lawyers that a quiz refusal could be met with a grand-jury subpoena. Here is what we know about grand juries: They give the prosecutor what he wants, which in this case just might be a criminal indictment, no matter what the Constitution says. Indictment can only follow impeachment, is the drift of the document.

That can be argued, and is, but we're also talking about something that could be hugely unsettling for this country. You would think Mueller would cool down for a minute and try to live up to his reputation as a man of honor. It's unlikely. His whole history is one of evading whatever is in the way of his getting the goods on someone. And so maybe it's time for this eager interrogator to face still more questions himself.

Why, for instance, did he instigate what constitutional expert Alan Dershowitz sees as a likely invasion of attorney-client privilege despite some technicalities? Does he deny that the hope is to get Trump's personal attorney to rat on him and to gather up killer data? And why did he think it was OK to have a guy named James Comey as a chief witness when the law says you just don't do that with a good friend? Does the partisan nature of his team bother him at all?

Going back to the past, why did he as FBI chief think it was OK back in 2006 to raid the congressional office of a representative and gather material not just related to alleged corruption but to legislation? Didn't he know that this was a violation of separation of powers? Why didn't he

listen to the speaker of the House, the attorney general and President Bush when they asked him to return the material?

A Wall Street Journal editorial notes that he said this was all political interference — by Republicans on behalf of a Democrat? — but a court later said it was a violation of the representative’s “non-disclosure privilege.” Is the FBI under no restrictions, Mueller?

Next, let’s visit with a 2011 Nation magazine article I happened across. It refers back to 2007 and the agency under Mueller was going crazy with surveillance of Americans suspected of terrorist links. In a 2011 Senate hearing about extending Mueller’s position as director, Sen. Al Franken asked if the FBI had misused nonjudicial, administrative subpoenas, and he said it had not except for a few mistakes. Did he not know an inspector general said the FBI broke the law 3,000 times?

I appreciate FBI diligence in seeking out terrorists, but there are limits, the limits prescribed by law. One of the best things about America is that we are a nation that believes in rule of law. Does Mueller concur with that?

Maybe Mueller will get Trump, especially if impeachment-focused Democrats take over Congress in the midterm elections. But does it bother him at all about his overreach in so many ways, about double standards, about FBI shenanigans, about the quest of so many to end the Trump presidency from the time he was elected?

Does Mueller want to go down in history as someone who helped damage democracy in the name of saving it?

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