

Trump's crisis deepens following FBI raid on his lawyer

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In the aftermath of Monday's FBI raid on President Trump's personal lawyer and confidante Michael Cohen, the White House appears to be increasingly isolated. Media speculation is growing about possible impeachment, especially if the Democrats gain control of the House of Representatives in the November midterm elections, along with the possibility of indictments against both Cohen and Trump himself.

The extraordinary action, triggered by a referral from Special Counsel Robert Mueller, has secured Cohen's computer, cell phone and personal financial records, as well as a trove of emails and other communications for Mueller's investigation into alleged Russian meddling and Trump campaign collusion. Cohen boasts of being Trump's "fixer" and, according to the *New York Times*, privately compares himself to Tom Hagen, the consigliere to the Corleone Mafia family in *The Godfather* film trilogy.

Mueller, the Democratic Party and the anti-Trump factions in the ruling class and state with which they are allied, as well as Trump himself, know very well that this material will include ample evidence of illegal activity by the billionaire real estate speculator and reality TV personality. Trump personifies the American financial oligarchy, with its backwardness, brutality and criminality.

A significant number of prominent Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, Senators Lindsey Graham, John Thune and others, have warned Trump not to go through with his new threats to fire Mueller, and only a few far-right Republican lawmakers have come to the president's defense.

Senate Democratic Minority Leader Charles Schumer took to the floor of the Senate Tuesday to warn Trump against firing Deputy Attorney General Rod

Rosenstein, who oversees the Mueller investigation. The ousting of Rosenstein would be the first step in shutting down the special counsel's probe. Schumer said, "Mr. President, any attempt to remove Rod J. Rosenstein will create the exact same constitutional crisis as if you fired Special Counsel Mueller."

Both porn star Stormy Daniels and Trump lawyer Cohen said they were cooperating with federal investigators, and Cohen gave an interview with CNN in which he commended the FBI agents who conducted the raid against him as "courteous and respectful."

Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan chose the aftermath of the FBI raid to announce that he would not be running for reelection in November. This is widely seen as a sign that the Republicans anticipate a Democratic victory in the fall that will secure the Democratic Party control of the House. Asked about Trump's threats to fire Mueller, Ryan said he had been reassured by the White House that there were no such plans.

That Mueller is moving toward an indictment of Trump on charges unrelated to the concocted narrative of Russian meddling in the 2016 election is indicated by the reported target of the raids carried out on Cohen's office and residences. The FBI agents executed warrants seeking records relating to hush money paid during the 2016 election to Daniels and a former Playboy playmate who claim to have had affairs with Trump. Cohen has acknowledged that he personally paid Daniels \$130,000 12 days before the presidential election to secure her silence. He claims Trump was unaware of the payment and the president himself has said he knew nothing about it.

The *New York Times* reported Wednesday that the agents were also seeking records related to the "Access Hollywood" tape that surfaced during the election

campaign in which Trump made vulgar statements about groping women. It thus appears that Mueller is escalating his legal assault by honing in on the sex scandal angle, long a favorite means by which the American ruling class fights out its internal battles.

The actual policy issues driving the political warfare in Washington center on fundamental questions of US imperialist foreign policy. The Democrats and a section of Republicans, fronting for the dominant factions of the intelligence establishment, oppose Trump for being “soft” on Russia and insufficiently aggressive in carrying out the US military intervention in Syria. Their anti-Russia propaganda is aimed at whipping up a war fever and at the same time justifying Internet censorship and the suppression of political dissent in the name of fighting Russian-inspired “fake news.”

They do not oppose Trump’s terror campaign against immigrants, his massive expansion of the military budget and stepped-up militarization of American society, his tax cuts for the rich or his attacks on social programs for workers and poor people.

Mueller’s move against Trump’s innermost circle is an expression of a loss of confidence within the ruling class in Trump’s ability to manage their foreign policy affairs, but also, crucially, his ability to deal with an increasingly tense internal situation. The upsurge in the class struggle, in the form of teachers’ strikes in a whole series of states and a growing rank-and-file rebellion against the corporatist trade unions, is a huge factor in driving the political crisis of American capitalism to a new level of intensity.

The increasing ferocity of the political conflict within the ruling class was reflected in the media response to the FBI raid. A reporter at Tuesday’s White House press briefing asked if Trump was considering stepping down, prompting a snap reply from Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders that the question was “ridiculous.”

The “Morning Joe” news program on the cable TV channel MSNBC on Wednesday began with a series of alternate shots of Nixon denouncing the Watergate investigation as a witch hunt with similar statements by Trump on the Mueller probe, implying that Trump’s days in office were similarly numbered.

With a combination of triumph and euphoria, the *New York Times* celebrated the raid on Cohen in the lead editorial of its April 11 edition (“The Law Is Coming,

Mr. Trump”). The *Times* in effect called the commander in chief and head of state of the United States a gangster. It wrote:

“Mr. Trump has spent his career in the company of developers and celebrities, and also of grifters, cons, sharks, goons and crooks. He cuts corners, he lies, he cheats, he brags about it, and for the most part, he’s gotten away with it, protected by threats of litigation, hush money and his own bravado. Those methods may be proving to have their limits when they are applied from the Oval Office.”

The *Wall Street Journal* distanced itself from the White House, declaring in its lead editorial Wednesday: “Washington now seems headed toward a fight-to-the-end between the president and his enemies ... Mr. Cohen knows as much about Mr. Trump’s personal and financial affairs as anyone, and prosecutors could use an indictment to coerce his cooperation against the president.”

It continued: “Never underestimate the president’s capacity to hurt himself. But firing Mr. Mueller wouldn’t stop the investigation, though it would cost him Republican support and probably guarantee his impeachment if Democrats take the House in November ... Mr. Trump can’t control Mr. Mueller, but he can control himself. That may be the only way he can save his presidency.”



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