

Roger Stone conviction affirms he lied about having connections with WikiLeaks

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On Friday morning, Roger Stone—the vulgar Republican Party consultant, lobbyist and confidant of President Donald Trump—was found guilty of all seven charges against him in a jury trial in a federal court in Washington, DC.

Stone is the sixth Trump associate to be convicted since December 2017 in the course of the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections. Stone joins the others who have been convicted of tax evasion and lying to the FBI—not collusion with the Russians—Michael Cohen, George Papadopoulos, Paul Manafort, Rick Gates and Michael Flynn.

Among the charges for which Stone was found guilty were five counts of giving false statements to the FBI and Congress, one count of obstruction of justice and one count of witness tampering. Following the conclusion of the trial, which began on November 6, the 12-person jury deliberated for less than two days before delivering its verdict in the courtroom of Judge Amy Berman Jackson.

A press statement on the US Justice Department's website reads: "The verdict followed a trial in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Stone faces a prison sentence of up to five years for counts one to six and up to 20 years for count seven." Stone was allowed to remain free prior to sentencing, which is set for February 6.

Stone was indicted in January by Robert Mueller and arrested, as part of the months-long federal probe into the alleged, but never proven, claims of both Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential elections and collusion by the Trump administration with the Russians against the Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton.

One of the most despicable aspects of the "Russian

meddling" narrative, concocted by a faction of the US intelligence establishment, is the lie that Julian Assange and WikiLeaks—working with the assistance of Trump's middle-man and operative Roger Stone—obtained hacked Democratic Party emails by collaborating with the Russians and then published them on the eve of the 2016 presidential elections.

Significantly, the verdict against Roger Stone proves only that he lied about these subjects when he was questioned during his testimony before the House Intelligence Committee in September 2017. Contrary to the present false and incessant claims by the corporate media, the verdict does not prove that WikiLeaks or Julian Assange worked with Roger Stone or the Russians in the lead up to the 2016 elections.

What it shows is that Stone—in keeping with his long record of dirty-tricks politics—was seeking to prove his value to the Trump election campaign by falsely claiming he had a relationship with WikiLeaks through his "back-channel" contact, Randy Credico.

As the Justice Department's press release states: "On September 26, 2017, in testimony to the Committee, Stone made a number of false statements relating to the identity of a person he had referred to in August 2016 as his 'back-channel' or 'intermediary' to the head of WikiLeaks; whether he had asked that person to do anything on his behalf; whether he had written communications with that person; whether he discussed that person with anyone involved with the Trump campaign; and whether he had written communications with third parties about the head of WikiLeaks."

The DOJ statement continues: "On October 13, 2017, Stone sent the House Intelligence Committee a letter falsely stating that the person he had referenced in August 2016 was an individual named Randy Credico. Stone then engaged in witness tampering by urging

Credico either to corroborate this false account, or to tell the Committee that he could not remember the relevant events, or to invoke his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination to avoid testifying before the Committee. Credico ultimately invoked his Fifth Amendment right in response to a Committee subpoena.”

In other words, in the course of his testimony before the House Intelligence Committee, Stone lied repeatedly and tried to cover his tracks regarding his political skullduggery and attempts to help the Trump campaign capitalize on the publication by Julian Assange and WikiLeaks of the contents of the hacked Democratic Party email servers.

That the Stone verdict further undermines the lie that WikiLeaks and Julian Assange were cogs in the alleged “Russian meddling” wheel has been noted by several journalists. Investigative journalist Michael Tracey, for example, tweeted: “Roger Stone was convicted for making false boastful claims and then lying about those claims. He was not convicted for any illicit relationship with WikiLeaks and/or Russia: the thing Mueller set out to investigate. If you don’t clarify this distinction, you’re just peddling crap.”

On the other hand, the *New York Times*—the leading defender of the discredited Russian interference allegation and proponent of the right-wing Democratic Party impeachment inquiry against President Trump on the basis of national security concerns—published an outright distortion of the Stone verdict. The Times claimed: “The evidence showed that in the months leading up to the 2016 election, Mr. Stone strove to obtain emails that Russia had stolen from Democratic computers and funneled to WikiLeaks, which released them at strategic moments timed to damage Hillary Clinton, Mr. Trump’s Democratic opponent.”

From the beginning, it has been clear that the campaign against the Trump administration over Russian meddling has included an effort to slander the work of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks and its exposure of US war crimes to the people of the world. This has been a critical aspect of the US vendetta against Assange that first resulted in his forced asylum for seven years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London and then, following his eviction from the embassy, his imprisonment for the past seven months in Belmarsh Prison.

On World January Socialist Post the Web published an analysis of Stone’s indictment and arrest that noted: “The Stone indictment revealed nothing that was not already known regarding WikiLeaks, which it called ‘Organization 1.’ It has simply underscored that WikiLeaks is a media organization which exercised the legally protected rights of the press under the First Amendment and the Supreme Court decision in the 1971 Pentagon Papers case. A media organization is entitled to publish information in the public interest, even if the source obtained it illegally.”



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