

The Anti-Democracy Operation Continues



by Lee Smith

Donald Trump's former attorney general wants the 45th president of the United States to step aside. According to William Barr, it's for the good of the Republican Party.

In a recent article, [Barr writes](#) that the GOP's leading candidate for the 2024 nomination "does not have the qualities required to win the kind of broad, durable victory I see as necessary to restore America."

There was a time when Republican voters hoped that Barr would restore the credibility of federal law enforcement. But the numbers show that the GOP base has less faith in the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) after Barr's two-year tenure than before it. And now with his latest anti-Trump salvo, it seems that

Barr has joined the effort he was hired to stop—the U.S. intelligence services' anti-democracy campaign.

As Brendon Fallon and I explain in the latest episode of "[Over the Target](#)," Trump voters were optimistic when Barr joined the administration. The lifelong Republican started his career at the CIA in the mid-1970s, served in the Ronald Reagan administration, and was named attorney general in 1991 in the George H.W. Bush administration. If anyone could reset America's foreign and domestic intelligence services and refocus them on their mission to defend U.S. national security, it was Barr.

He came on board after the DOJ and FBI had interfered in two consecutive elections. The FBI spied on the 2016 Trump campaign while the Bureau's informants leaked false information to the press regarding the Trump team's ties to Russia.

The FBI continued to target Trump even after he took office, as the Russia probe continued in the form of a special counsel investigation led by former FBI chief Robert Mueller. The investigation of a sitting president accused of "colluding" with a foreign power shaped public perception of Trump's party and thus interfered with the November 2018 midterms.

Named attorney general in December 2018, Barr hit the ground running. He soon brought an end to Mueller's weaponized probe and then tapped John Durham to investigate the origins of the FBI's Trump-Russia campaign. GOP congressional investigators, as well as the Republican base, were confident that Barr and Durham would hold the Deep State conspirators accountable for their crimes and abuses.

Barr counseled patience and explained that investigations take time. And yet he must have also understood that if no one was brought to justice for interfering in the 2016 election, there would be nothing to dissuade the same agencies from repeating

their efforts in 2020.

Indeed, even after Barr had closed Mueller's shop, the spy services' anti-democracy operation moved into a new phase, with Russiagate blending seamlessly into Ukrainegate. The former was premised on a dossier authored by a retired British foreign spy falsely alleging that Trump had been compromised by Moscow. The latter started when a CIA officer, believed to be [Eric Ciaramella](#), filed a whistleblower complaint concerning a phone conversation between Trump and the president of Ukraine.

The whistleblower alleged that Trump had bullied the foreign leader by threatening to withhold military aid unless he helped dig up dirt on his political rivals. In reality, Trump had asked the Ukrainian leader to assist Barr in uncovering the role that other Ukrainian officials had played in promoting Russiagate. Trump also sought information regarding Joe and Hunter Biden's ties to a Ukrainian energy company under international investigations.

Barack Obama's former vice president had publicly acknowledged that he threatened to withhold \$1 billion from the government of Ukraine if Kyiv didn't fire the prosecutor allegedly investigating the company that paid Hunter Biden more than \$80,000 per month. Trump wanted more details about that arrangement, but Biden allies and others likely implicated in the scandal—U.S. intelligence operatives and Democratic Party officials—teamed with the media to protect Biden and themselves.

It was Trump, they said, not Biden who was guilty of abusing his power with a quid pro quo. Impeachment proceedings against Trump began in October 2019.

The same month, the FBI had been alerted to the existence of a laptop owned by Hunter Biden that gave evidence of his financial ties to the Ukrainian firm and Joe Biden's

supporting role in his son's business affairs. In December, the Justice Department took possession of the laptop as the Democrat-led congress voted to impeach Trump.

That is, while Trump was being impeached, the agencies under Barr's control had evidence of the Bidens' financial dealings in Ukraine. The information found in the laptop supports Trump contention that he had not abused his power, but rather as president had fulfilled his duty to protect U.S. national security by asking for information regarding the extent of the Bidens' alleged corruption abroad. Trump was impeached for what Barr's Justice Department knew to be false.

As for the Durham investigation, Barr made two significant statements in spring 2020. First, he violated DOJ protocol by commenting on an ongoing investigation to say that Biden and Obama were not investigative targets. Why was he publicly clearing the former president and the 2020 Democratic candidate when declassified documents showed that both were knowing participants in the Russiagate scandal?

Second, Barr said he expected developments in Durham's cases by late summer. But when Labor Day passed and there were no indictments or reports, it became obvious that Durham's investigation was stalled until after the November vote.

Thus, Barr had botched his mission. Without anyone held accountable for crimes committed during the 2016 election, the coast was clear for U.S. spy services to again tilt the political process on behalf of their preferred candidate. And indeed, the FBI was once again on the march during the 2020 election season.

In October 2020, reports of Hunter Biden's laptop surfaced in conservative media outlets. FBI agents tasked to investigate the laptop falsely claimed that it was Russian disinformation and buried their work. The mainstream press and social media platforms such as Facebook used the FBI's assessment to censor

reports of the laptop, while a group of former U.S. intelligence officials used it to substantiate a letter contending the laptop was planted by Moscow.

Biden repeated the FBI's lie about the laptop in his first televised debate with Trump. Barr later wrote that he was shocked to hear the Democratic candidate say that the laptop was Russian disinformation. That is, Barr knew at the time that the laptop was authentic, even as his deputies were spreading government-sanctioned lies abetting First Amendment violations by persuading the press and social media to censor information about the laptop.

Barr resigned in December 2020 ostensibly outraged by Trump's demands that DOJ investigate election fraud. There was no evidence anything was wrong with the vote, Barr claimed. But the very institutions that Barr directed had interfered in the 2020 election as they had in the 2016 and 2018 vote. Federal law enforcement authorities had again defrauded the U.S. electorate, this time under the nose of the man who was hired to restore their credibility.

Because Barr didn't bring the FBI to heel—and because Durham has failed to convict anyone for Russiagate—federal law enforcement's anti-democracy campaign continues unabated.

In August 2022, the FBI raided Trump's Florida home in search of what it alleged were classified documents. Barr reasoned at the time that the DOJ probably had enough to indict Trump. But the reality is that the unprecedented violation of a former president's privilege and property was a ham-fisted attempt to shape the voting public's assessment of the party Trump still leads and thus interfere in a U.S. election.

With Trump declaring his intention to run for president a third time, the Justice Department has already unsheathed a weapon it means to use in preparation for the 2024 race. A special counsel has been appointed to investigate the leading

GOP candidate for his potential involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021, protests and the classified documents he allegedly held at Mar-a-Lago.

And it's in this context that Barr's article demanding Trump step down, published shortly after the special counsel was named, requires an assessment not only of Barr's tenure as Trump's attorney general but also of his character.

Barr makes his home and his living in the nation's capital. It's hardly surprising he seeks to re-ingratiate himself with the Beltway officials, bureaucrats, lobbyists, and contractors on whom Trump made war and who continue to make war on the former president. But adding his voice to the Justice Department's serial campaign to interfere in elections suggests that his inability to hold anyone accountable for the ongoing assault on democracy may be owing to something worse than incompetence or even cowardice.

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