IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

CR Action Plaintiff, No. 1:21-670

vs. Washington, D.C.

December 7, 2021

STEPHEN K. BANNON,

11:03 a.m.

Defendant.

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO STATUS CONFERENCE BEFORE THE HONORABLE CARL J. NICHOLS UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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PROCEEDINGS

COURTROOM DEPUTY: Good morning, Judge Nichols.

THE COURT: Good morning, Ms. Harris. Could you please call this matter.

COURTROOM DEPUTY: We are on the record in criminal matter 21-670, United States of America versus Stephen K. Bannon.

Present for the government are Amanda Vaughn, J.P. Cooney and Molly Gaston. Present for the defendant are David Schoen, Matthew Corcoran and Robert Costello. Also present is the defendant, Mr. Bannon.

THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Harris.

Just one little housekeeping thing. Mr. Corcoran, does your client consent to proceed this morning by videoconference?

MR. CORCORAN: Yes.

THE COURT: Thank you.

I would like to first take up the question of the protective order. It seems to me that there is a little bit of agreement here and then some disagreement. I just want to make sure I understand the parties' positions on the various categories of information that would be covered by the government's proposed protective order. The first is, it seems to me, grand jury materials.

Am I right, Mr. Corcoran, that the defendant

agrees that it's appropriate to have a protective order that covers materials that were in front of the grand jury or at least the information reflecting that the materials in front of the grand jury should be redacted if they are used publicly or something like that? At least that is what your filing suggests.

MR. CORCORAN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Yes, that the protective order should cover the grand jury materials or, yes, and that they should be, if used at all, redacted such that grand jury information is not publicly disseminated?

MR. CORCORAN: The latter.

Essentially we are just asking for the normal treatment, which keeps these grand jury materials secret, unless and until we were to file them, you know, or use them at trial for cross-examination or file them in connection with the case, in which case we would make a motion with you beforehand.

THE COURT: Ms. Vaughn, does the government think that is an appropriate position?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay.

Then as to personal identifying information or PII, what is the defendant's view about whether that should be treated as sensitive information under the protective

order?

MR. CORCORAN: We agree. And any court filings that we would make, we would redact personal identifying information such as Social Security numbers, home addresses, telephone numbers, et cetera.

THE COURT: And, Ms. Vaughn, I assume the government agrees with that?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

actually not covered by the government's revised protective order and that would be information -- because the government's proposed protective order covers only information, as I understand it, produced by the government to Mr. Bannon, it does not apply to information obtained by Mr. Bannon through other sources, whether public information or obtained in some other manner. So the protective order doesn't even cover that information.

I assume, Mr. Corcoran, you have no problem with that.

MR. CORCORAN: Well, if what you are saying, Your Honor, is that materials that come into our possession, not through the government, through discovery, that we are able to handle them as we ordinarily would, I agree with that.

THE COURT: Ms. Vaughn, I believe that's the government's intent.

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor, it is.

THE COURT: So it seems to me that that leaves non-grand jury, non-PII information produced by the government to the defendant in this case. The government is proposing not to treat that information as sensitive, as I understand it. Although I suppose it, in specific categories, could be at some point more sensitive.

But in general, the disagreement seems to be that such information, if produced by the government to Mr. Bannon, the limitation is not the sensitive designation limitations but just the general limitation that that information can be used only in this case.

Do I have that right, Ms. Vaughn?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, that's right, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So let's go through the different categories of information that would be covered or at least, you know, the ones that the government has identified in its reply, for example.

So if the government produces to Mr. Bannon in connection with this case, either publicly available information or information that Mr. Bannon likely already has, why would that restriction make sense?

MS. VAUGHN: Your Honor, we actually don't -- our intention with the revised protective order would be that it would not apply to those kind of materials. So anything

that is publicly available, independent from this case, for which the defendant has obtained by independent means, when the government produces copies of those items, that would not be covered by the proposed protective order.

THE COURT: So it's not just that the proposed protective order doesn't cover materials obtained by Mr. Bannon through some other source, but even if the materials are obtained from the government, if those materials were publicly available or were -- I guess I'll put it this way, were known to have been in Mr. Bannon's possession at some point because he was a recipient of a communication or something like that, the government's position is that information, even though produced by the government to Mr. Bannon, is also not subject to the restrictions in the protective order. Correct?

MS. VAUGHN: That's right, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay. So what we are really talking about then, is whatever other information is both not grand jury information, not PII, not publicly available, not otherwise in Mr. Bannon's possession for various reasons.

And I take it, that's really things like information relating to witnesses.

For example, I am looking at Page 3 of your brief, your reply brief, law enforcement reports of witness interviews and internal communications between Select

Committee staff and really law enforcement database information relating to the defendant. Those seem to be the three categories that we're talking about now.

So, Mr. Corcoran, with respect to those three categories of information, law enforcement reports of witness interviews, internal communication between Select Committee staff and law enforcement database relating to the defendant, why isn't it appropriate to limit the use of that information to use in this case?

Again, as I understand it at least, that information, if used in the case, wouldn't have to be filed under seal. It can be essentially used in any way necessary to Mr. Bannon's defense. But the one limitation would be its use would have to be tethered to use in this litigation.

What is the problem from Mr. Bannon's perspective with that limitation?

MR. CORCORAN: Well, first of all, on the fourth category that you just mentioned, law enforcement database information with regard to Mr. Bannon, we don't have any problem with that remaining protected and not being disclosed publicly.

But the other three categories we do have a problem with. The problem is -- and I know the Court has used the phrase "used in this case," but that's not what what was written in the protective order, either one of the

protective orders that the government submitted to you. And our problem is that under the current protective order that they're suggesting, they get to stamp something as sensitive, and then we are limited, not just by use in the case, but how we can use it in the case.

For instance, their initial submission wouldn't allow -- let's take a generic example of an email that forwards the subpoena from one staff member on the House Select Committee to another member on the House Select Committee. The government is saying that that is somehow sensitive, that it shouldn't be made public; and that we should be restricted in how we can use that in preparing our defense.

To the extent that, as I read the protective order, we couldn't go to another potential witness, such as legislative counsel, somebody that has worked on the Hill and has been doing this for decades and asking them, Take a look at this email. Was the process followed here proper?

THE COURT: That seems to me correct if that document is marked as sensitive. But I think the government has represented that the only materials right now that it intends to mark as sensitive are grand jury materials and PII. So the document that you have identified would be marked as sensitive only if it was in front of the grand jury. If it's produced to you in a form that did not go

before the grand jury and it doesn't have a grand jury Bates number on it, or whatever, all of those restrictions you just identified would not be applicable.

MR. CORCORAN: Well, if that's the government's position today, it's different than what they've submitted. And I'm happy to hear that. And it eliminates some of the issues that we would have in terms of the use of the document.

I think that the real problem here, from our perspective, is that it's not our burden to show that good cause exists for any protective order. It's the government's, and they've got to make a specific particularized showing.

So in the typical case where there would be restriction on the use of documents that reference, for instance, witness names or witness information or witness positions, it might be a gang case where there has been some actual intimidation of witnesses; that I can understand. There's none of that in this case. This is a case of U.S. government employees who are, essentially, doing their official duties.

And for the government to state that there's some reason, that they haven't expressed yet, as to why these things need to be handled differently, like documents in a gang case, it just doesn't make sense to us.

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THE COURT: Ms. Vaughn, so do I have the government's position correct, which is that these categories of documents that I have just referenced at Page 3 of your reply brief, and in particular law enforcement reports of witness interviews, internal communications between Select Committee staff and law enforcement database information relating to the defendant -- the last category actually sounds like there is no objection to the protective order covering -- am I right, that as to the first two, that is to say law enforcement reports of witness interviews and internal communications between Select Committee staff, that as the government conceives the protective order here, those documents would be marked as sensitive only if they went before the grand jury or they contained PII. If the particular version of the document didn't go before the grand jury, it would be covered by the protective order, but the limitations for sensitive information would not be applicable; is that right?

MS. VAUGHN: That's right, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So then that really just raises the question of, Okay, for those versions of the documents that are not sensitive, they can be used in the case, but they can't be used otherwise.

And Mr. Corcoran makes the argument that the government still bears the burden of showing why there is

good cause even for that limitation. So what is the government's argument as to why documents by definition aren't sensitive -- because they wouldn't be sensitive under the protective order, nevertheless deserve some protection limiting their use to this litigation. What is the government's basis for that limitation?

MS. VAUGHN: Well, Your Honor, there are two reasons for that. Most importantly, the defendant in his public statements, through his counsel and representatives, has made clear that he intends to make this material available to the public for public discussion and evaluation.

He told The Washington Post, quote, Members of the public should make their own independent judgment as to whether the U.S. Department of Justice is committed to a just result based upon all of the facts; and that by their opposition to the protective order they, quote, asked the judge to follow the normal process and allow unfettered access to and use of the documents. And the defendant also made statements he plans to make this case hell for those involved.

So the defendant has shown that he plans to disseminate the materials widely for public comment and review; and that would interfere with the proper procedures in this case. By putting witness statements out publicly,

you expose those witnesses to commentary on their potential testimony. You allow those witnesses to know what other witnesses are going to say, potentially influencing their testimony at trial. And for those reasons, a protective order would be appropriate in this case. This case should be decided in the courtroom through this litigation, not in the media.

THE COURT: I just have a question.

So imagine I agree with that, and that there are certain categories of information that are not sensitive but they are otherwise subject to the protective order. If one or the other party wants to file information relating to those categories in a public submission to me, to the Court, they don't have to do so under seal. Correct? That would be public.

MS. VAUGHN: Correct, Your Honor.

If it's part of the litigation in this case, it becomes a judicial record and therefore it is publicly available.

THE COURT: Would anything stop one party or the other from, essentially, putting all of the non-sensitive but produced information into a filing in front of me and thereby talking about it?

MS. VAUGHN: Your Honor, the parties are under obligations to act in good faith with the Court and only

bring before the Court what they believe in good faith to be issues to be resolved by the Court. So if there is genuinely a need to bring a witness statement to the Court's attention, then obviously that is something the parties can do.

The government would submit it would be in violation of the parties obligation as officers of the Court to simply just file something and attach everything just so that it could be in the public record.

THE COURT: Thank you.

Mr. Corcoran, what is your response to

Ms. Vaughn's two-pronged argument as to why it's appropriate
to have this potentially modest restriction on these
categories of information?

Which is to say -- and just to be clear, as I understand it, this is information that would not be designated as sensitive. So you would be free to use this information to prepare the case and to talk to witnesses and the like, and even to file the information on the public record, but you would be restricted from using that information other than, basically, to litigate this matter.

MR. CORCORAN: Your Honor, my response is that that is not a modest restriction. It's actually a very stringent restriction, and we believe that there has been a motion to intervene by a coalition of members of the press

of essentially -- you know, largely leading members of the press. And they've been uniform in their position that they want a public trial. They want public access to documents, and there is public interest in this case.

What Ms. Vaughn has suggested by her statements is that somehow we on the defense side have an interest in taking the documents that they give us and turning this into a public trial; and that is not our intention at all.

What we do want, though, is for the public to have the ability to see how the decisions were made in this case so that -- I think it's a positive thing, actually, that there's public interest in this case that has important and complex constitutional issues at play that involve the interplay between the legislative branch and the executive branch. From my perspective, that is a positive thing.

Has Ms. Vaughn, on behalf of the government, made a showing that would provide good cause for a protective order to keep those documents secret? We don't believe so. And we think that any protective order in this case would not be a modest one, but would be severe in its limitations on Mr. Bannon's First Amendment and Sixth Amendment rights.

THE COURT: Thank you. So I'll take this under advisement. I hope to enter a protective order that will probably be not quite in the format of what is proposed by the government, clearly, because I think we've moved in some

ways away from the parties' perspective positions. I will take it under advisement. I will be entering a protective order of some sort because there is agreement as to at least certain categories of information that would be protected as to sensitive --

MR. SCHOEN: Judge, if I may, David Schoen. I just wanted to clarify one point here, by specifying a kind of document to make clear our argument.

For example, one of the categories Your Honor mentioned were these internal communications with the Committee. Let's talk about that type of document or Committee document. Our view is, those are presumptively — if we get them, they are presumptively public. These are public servants doing the public's business now.

So that document though wouldn't be considered sensitive. It would be in the all materials category. And would still be subject to the restrictions in Paragraphs 4 through 8, meaning of the modified proposed protective order, ECF 12-1.

Meaning it can be shown to witnesses but not to anyone else. Meaning we can't take notes and disclose our notes on those documents. Those kinds of restrictions that ordinarily wouldn't be in place if there were no protective order. Now, if they --

THE COURT: Wait. Wait. Hold on. Pause one

Where does that limitation you just identified come 1 second. 2 from? 3 MR. SCHOEN: Paragraphs 4 through 8 of the modified protective order. The government's proposal, ECF 4 5 12-1. THE COURT: Right. No, I understand. 6 7 non-sensitive information. Again, let's take produced documents relating to 8 9 the Committee's consideration of the contempt citation. 10 Assuming they are produced to the defendant, and they are 11 not designated as sensitive, they would only be subject to 12 Paragraphs 4 through 8. 13 I want you to point me to the specific limitation 14 that you think is limiting on Mr. Bannon's ability to 15 prepare his defense in this case. 16 MR. SCHOEN: No, Your Honor. I don't think they 17 are limiting on his ability to prepare his defense. I think 18 they are limiting on the public's right to know --19 THE COURT: Pause there then. Wait a second. 20 There is no limitation in here on the filing of 21 such information in court or the use of such information 22 publicly. They can be attached to -- I mean, 23 hypothetically, if we have litigation around a 24 constitutional claim about what the Committee did or advice

of counsel, these documents can and very likely will be put

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on the public record, and at the time that they are part of the arguments in front of me, will be public.

What I think can't happen, at least under the government's proposal, is when those materials are produced to the defendant, that they can be given to the press without regard to whether they are relevant to the litigation or being used in the litigation at all.

My question is, I guess, why is that an appropriate outcome here, which is that a record produced to the government -- sorry -- by the government to Mr. Bannon, can be used by him, not by definition for litigation, because we already said there is no limitation there, but just for any other purpose.

MR. SCHOEN: Yeah. I think coming from the perspective that the documents are presumptively public, if they are the public business. However, if there is something — in my view at least, the way the methodology should work is that if there is something about that Committee communication, since that is what we are talking about, that the government believes to be something that shouldn't be publicly disclosed, it doesn't reach the level of sensitive, by definition or anything, but for some reason it shouldn't be, then it should be incumbent on the government to say, We are producing this internal Congressional Committee report, whatever the communication.

And we believe this one should be kept away from the press or otherwise.

Because, remember, under Paragraph 4, we can only show this to potential witnesses and their counsel, et cetera. And remember, under Paragraph 5, we are restricted on the notetaking and those sort of things. I don't think -- this is my view at least -- I don't think, from the public perspective, there should be those restrictions, unless there is specific reason for it. If someone is at risk, and they can make a showing of that. I think that should be on a document-by-document basis when they are produced.

That is our position, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Ms. Vaughn, why is that not a reasonable outcome here, which is you have categories of sensitive information, as to everything else that would be covered by this protective order?

Again, I'm recognizing that there are a number of categories of information that as a result of this discussion aren't covered by the protective order at all.

But as to those documents that are produced in litigation that would be covered by this protective order, that the government needs to make more of an individualized/particularized showing as to harm rather than just say, essentially, everything that we would produce in

these categories is restricted in the way that Paragraphs 4 through 8 restrict the defense.

Why shouldn't the government have to make a more particularized showing on a document-by-document or at least category-by-category basis?

MS. VAUGHN: Your Honor, the government believes that it has made a particularized showing on a category-by-category basis, and that that is sufficient here.

So there's two categories of records at issue now.

Law enforcement reports of interviews. And, frankly, I

think it would be unprecedented for 302s to start popping up
all over the press in a criminal matter.

And then the second category is internal communications between Committee staff, which actually are not presumptively public. So all of those, though, go to this issue of influencing — improperly influencing witnesses. It's their communications summarizing what occurred with respect to Mr. Bannon's subpoena. And it's interviews in which they discuss their memory and experience of the same events.

So allowing the defendant to disseminate those to the press will absolutely have the result that these witnesses' potential testimony at trial will be influenced in a way that's not appropriate in a criminal case like

this.

MR. SCHOEN: Your Honor, if I may, Judge.

THE COURT: You will get a chance in a second.

MR. SCHOEN: Yes, sir.

THE COURT: But I take it the government, notwithstanding those concerns, is fine with that information being filed on the public record to the extent that that information is relevant to an issue to be decided.

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay. Mr. Schoen or Mr. Corcoran?

MR. SCHOEN: Yes, Your Honor.

Your Honor, I suppose on this specific issue it represents a fundamental philosophical difference, frankly. We do believe that the Committee's discussions about Mr. Bannon's subpoena, about why to take this criminal, about taking other virtually unprecedented steps, is the business of the public.

And if there is a reason with respect to a specific document, again, that something is at risk that the public shouldn't be exposed to, then the government makes that showing and Your Honor reviews it and makes a determination; that's all.

THE COURT: But what about the alternative, which is to say, we are now talking about two categories of documents. Ms. Vaughn has made her argument about why those

categories at least can be presumptively used only in this litigation. And if the defendant would like to do something more, the defendant is free to ask for relief from the protective order on a document-by-document basis when you are in this category.

MR. CORCORAN: Your Honor -- David, if I could.

Your Honor, I just want to be very clear in terms of what the government has offered in terms of a particularized showing trying to establish good cause. And what they've said is that by releasing a document publicly, it would improperly influence witnesses.

That does not make any sense for the following reason. Under Paragraph 4 we would, in any event, be able to show any of our witnesses that very document. So what the government is saying that somehow the public disclosure of a document would improperly influence or shape a witness's testimony, but actually defense counsel showing it to them is not going to have the same effect.

In other words, what they've put forth as their sole, particularized reason justifying this aspect of the protective order is baseless and meritless.

MR. SCHOEN: Judge, my answer to your question directly -- to Your Honor's question directly, is that as to -- Your Honor proposed the alternative. What about if we just then made a showing? I think my answer to that is, I

don't think that's the manner of proceeding that cases like Dixon and Johnson suggest.

But let me say this, Your Honor, we have absolutely no question in our mind that Your Honor is just as sensitive to the public's right to know as we are, and will take that into account in however Your Honor believes is the best way to proceed with respect to those documents on whom the burden should lie, et cetera.

THE COURT: Thank you.

So as I said, I'll consider these arguments and craft what I believe is an appropriate protective order here.

So let's talk now about the overall schedule of the case. I've obviously -- I don't know if it's obvious but I have reviewed the parties' submissions and the joint status report, which I think was very helpful.

I think maybe I'd like to start with you, Mr. Corcoran.

MR. CORCORAN: Your Honor, I will have Mr. Schoen speak to this.

THE COURT: Okay, Mr. Schoen. Of course, I understand that there might be an advice of counsel defense here. I also understand there may be some constitutional arguments made. But can you tell me more about what specifically the defendant would intend to contend by way of

those, what you say are weighty, important separation of powers and other constitutional arguments?

I think I need to know a little bit more about how supposedly difficult these questions are going to be before I think about how they will affect the overall trial schedule.

MR. SCHOEN: Sure, Your Honor.

I preface this by saying not just difficult, but also fact intensive to some degree. Meaning information is required. I would divide that, by the way, into information being required for motions to dismiss practice and for trial defenses in the case.

I'd like to give a little bit of background. Here is what I am prepared to do, Judge. I am prepared to first address Your Honor's question directly, with the caveat, you know, that we have been in this case for three weeks. The case is only three weeks old. So I can only go into so many details about those defenses.

THE COURT: Right. And this is not your argument on the motion to dismiss or otherwise. I am not asking for a full argument.

MR. SCHOEN: I understand, Your Honor.

What I also want to say I am prepared to do is go a little more specifically into exactly what the kinds of discovery is I believe we would need from the House, from

the DOJ, from the U.S. Attorneys, what we are talking about here in terms of that body of discovery.

So let me go first into maybe the defenses and the motion to dismiss. And then I think I can tie in why I believe specific discovery I would mention is relevant, necessary and time consuming. Would that be an acceptable way of proceeding, Your Honor?

THE COURT: Yes.

MR. SCHOEN: All right.

So first of all, on the motions to dismiss, I think there are some that are discovery sensitive and some that aren't. But for example, we are going to be asking the case, we made clear in the joint status report, for the grand jury instruction. We clearly have a fundamental difference of viewpoint with the government on the nature of this case from start to finish.

The government has said in their papers they see it as a one-day trial. It's basically a strict liability case, according to the government. This is what they said in the first hearing on the 18th. They didn't appear, therefore he is guilty under Section 192.

We think that is fundamentally wrong. Yes, there was a case, *Licavoli* in 1961 that said, advice of counsel doesn't apply, for example, in 192 prosecution. First of all, that case is based on an earlier case, *Sinclair*, that's

no longer good law. But in any event, there are a many reason that it doesn't apply, specific to the facts of this case.

This is a case with the invocation of privilege.

This is a case in which the government was made aware, as
the Committee was made aware, Mr. Bannon relied entirely on
the advice of counsel.

We believe that the grand jury was not instructed correctly as a matter of law in this case. And advice of counsel is not an affirmative defense to be instructed to grand jury. It's an element -- it negates an element of the offense.

If the government's theory, as they've expressed it at least, in very limited fashion I understand, but on the 18th, is that all that is required is for him to appear. And that is what the grand jury was instructed.

We think the indictment would have to be dismissed, and we would make that showing. That's not something I think that a great deal of discovery is required for. We would show why, you know, reliance on counsel was relevant here and so on.

We believe, again motion to dismiss, the grand jury wasn't given exculpatory evidence. Again, if this is the government's theory of the case, if just showing up was enough, we imagine at least that the government didn't

instruct the grand jury on the status of Office of Legal Counsel Counsel opinions, on reliance on Office of Legal Counsel opinions, on defenses like entrapment by estoppel and other entrapment, potentially, efforts to cooperate, reliance on good faith alternative. These kinds of things that are all part of the package. So these are motions to dismiss. Again, I don't think they are particularly discovery dependent.

But let's talk about no proper legislative purpose; that's a constitutional defense we would raise. It's discussed at length in the, you know, Mazars case. And essentially that defense is that, you know, there are only certain purposes the Committee can be convened for, as the the Court well knows. It can't issue a subpoena just for the purpose of law enforcement. It can't use subpoenas to try someone before the Committee for any crime or wrongdoing. It can't have a general power of inquiry, just for exposure sake. It can't convict investigations for personal aggrandizement of the members, et cetera. And recipients maintain all of their constitutional rights, including the right to privilege and so on. That's clear from the Mazars case, 2020.

For this defense we need to look at, for example, many, many, many statements made by members of the Committee, which several scholars have suggested -- suggest

an unconstitutional purpose, a non-legislative purpose in this case. But we also would want to see what the Committee talked about on what their agenda was here. There's a lot of language in Resolution 503 that dresses it up and makes it look like an appropriate purpose, but there is good reason to believe that it wasn't.

Selective prosecution, quite frankly, it's a difficult burden, but it is a motion we intend to make. Prosecution based on a partisan political attack, we believe. Prosecution based oven an attack on First Amendment rights, we believe. A prosecution based on vindictiveness, we believe. We need to see things like, you know, the House documents. We need to see, Why did everyone along the way here go against the well-settled Office of Legal Counsel opinions on a variety of subjects, which again we can go into.

I know Your Honor said this is not a forum to argue the motion.

THE COURT: I also am very familiar with almost all of those arguments.

MR. SCHOEN: Of course, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So I don't think you need to elaborate on them. I just want to understand what you are likely to make.

MR. SCHOEN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: I get the arguments.

MR. SCHOEN: And there are several others like that that we believe require some discovery. Failure to follow their own rules and protocol potentially. There is an argument to be made about that potentially.

What was the status of privilege, for example, discussed in the Committee? Because that raises a real separation of powers issue, we believe. We believe that the executives entitled to determine what documents and information is privileged and we believe that the -- not just we believe. I mean, this district has said in very strong terms that binding effect on the executive branch of the Office of Legal Counsel opinions. Those were violated in this case. We believe we need discovery on how that happened.

Now, so those are some of the defenses and motions to dismiss that I think are complicated and fact intensive to some degree. And if the government, their position in their joint status report was the discovery they believe we are going to ask for -- I'm not sure how they knew, since we didn't know yet exactly and we still don't know. We are developing our case -- are either not discoverable or not the government's obligation to disclose.

I think in the latter case, I think the government's being too narrow in their view of what they are

going to be obligated to disclose, and I think that they are being modest about their ability, frankly, to disclose those things.

But if the government is right and those things aren't going to be disclosed by the government, that means extensive subpoena practice and motions practice simply about our entitlement to some of these documents.

I will move very quickly, Your Honor. I'm sorry to tie you up, but it is a little bit of a, you know, a complicated process.

With respect to the House, for example, this is our view -- by the way I will back up one step further. I want to make this clear. We believe that there is no basis for expediting this case whatsoever. That the government made the decision in this case, an almost unprecedented decision, and certainly an unprecedented decision for the past decades, to go with a criminal prosecution in this case.

This is a case in which Mr. Bannon -- I know in the previous proceeding Your Honor said you are not sufficiently familiar with the facts. I can't give all of the facts now, clearly. But the Court should know that this is a case in which Mr. Bannon made the offer to go before a civil court. And if a Court ordered him to comply, he would comply. But that course wasn't taken.

So when this decision was made to go criminal, it no longer was a quest for information; that's for sure. If this were a case in which the Committee needed to have some knowledge and therefore we needed to move more quickly, that would be one thing. They made a decision that this is probably the last way to get information, and they had that other option. This was a radical move that they made. And we believe for a bad motive. Those are the kind of things we want to look into.

But secondly, of course, by making that decision they triggered a number of constitutional rights that otherwise wouldn't have attended it. So Mr. Bannon is entitled to all of these things, this discovery, this research, this investigation that both goes to the integrity of their investigation — meaning the Committee's work in this case, that's *Kyles versus Whitley*, sort of approach — and it goes to his ability to prepare the case.

So let's talk about the House. The House said in some of their public statements they wanted to investigate the root causes of what happened on January 6th. And everyone understands and agrees. Momentous episode in American history. But what we are hearing from the Committee is accusation, public accusation, after accusation.

Let me say this, Judge, I don't believe that there

is any reasonable person living in a democracy, who would believe that an investigation should be headed up by a person who filed a personal lawsuit against President Trump immediately before being appointed head of the Committee, who in that lawsuit accused President Trump and others of personally injuring him, causing him great personal injury and damage, to then appoint that person to head up an investigative committee, raises some antenna, let's just say. And then to populate that Committee with other people who have made public statements.

Congressman Raskin was the lead prosecutor in the impeachment case. His mission in that case was to prove that former president Trump and others associated with him were responsible for the events of January 6th. This is a person on the Committee. We have reason to question his motivation. We have reason, when they make public statements extraordinarily accusatory of Mr. Bannon in particular and statements like, We are going to make a point here. We are going to teach other people a lesson. We are going to show other people what they need to do by prosecuting Bannon, that we are entitled to know what the processes were within that House Committee. They've opened the door with those public statements. We are entitled to know, again, what the House's view was of privilege.

You know, the head of the Committee, Chairman

Thompson, was just on television I believe last night on The Rachel Maddow Show and said, Anyone who comes before this Committee, who exercises — invokes their Fifth Amendment privilege is basically saying, I did something wrong.

That's not right. That's not how our constitution operates.

That is misinformation and disinformation.

If that's coming from the Chairman, then we ought to be entitled to know what it is the House Committee members discussed about that. How they made their decision. Again, these are all focused on the defense and motion to dismiss regarding proper legislative purpose.

Judge, I can go on. I mean, I have pages here of what we need from the House and why. I assume the Court's got the point. I can talk a little bit about the U.S. Attorney's Office. Let me just say this about that. I will make one point. I think we are entitled to know why the U.S. Attorney's Office deviated so radically from their past process.

Let me just take an exerpt from a letter from former U.S. Attorney Mr. Manchen, just 2015, which he said, this conclusion -- I am reading from Page 6 of it -- this conclusion follows from the Justice Department's long-standing interpretation of Section 194 -- that's the section that refers this case up here -- as preserving the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in the executive

branch.

Now, here, It has long been the position of the department across administrations of both political parties that we will not prosecute an executive branch official under the contempt of Congress statute for withholding subpoenaed documents pursuant to a presidential assertion of executive privilege.

And we can show the Court other OLC opinions that say this applies to former members also. It extends to people outside of the branch even, if the president consults with them, because the president is entitled to.

I know the Court is familiar with those principles. I don't need to go into it. But the point is, we are entitled to -- there is no question any fair-minded person would raise that there has been a radical deviation from protocol and from the Office of Legal Counsel opinions in this case. So that's something for the U.S. Attorney's Office to say.

And the grand jury, we spoke about already, where they presented with this case, as if it were a case of strict liability, where they are given the exculpatory information *Williams* and other cases require.

On the White House, we have an unprecedented situation here, Judge, in which President Biden himself called for the prosecution of Mr. Bannon and people

similarly situated. He then took back his comments and said he recognized they were inappropriate, leading the Justice Department to make a statement to the effect that they won't be influenced by those kinds of statements.

What went on with the White House that the President of the United States weighed in publicly like that? What kind of influence, if any, did that cause? Those are some ideas, Judge, about some of the kinds of defenses we know about now, only three weeks and change into the case, and why we need some discovery and time. And if not discovery, then subpoenas and motions practice to litigate.

Sorry for talking so long, Judge.

THE COURT: Why do you need ten months?

MR. SCHOEN: Ten months is not a magic number,

Judge. It's a number that we did based on the length of

time cases in this district go and the structure of orders

that we culled from, in working backwards through this. We

need an extensive period of time. And we need time -- it

may be if a time is set, we need more time as we go along.

I will say this, without any equivocation whatsoever, I think that the government's proposal here, that in six days we need to have to them our requests for formal discovery, putting aside everything else. As I say, we've been in this case three weeks and change. We had

dockets before this. I have a brief due in the 11th Circuit Friday. I have a brief due in the Second Circuit next Friday. So there are just those practical things.

But beyond that, I say this unequivocally, the idea of a trial in April, which the government says is six months from indictment -- that in and itself confounded me. I mean, I've tried on each of my hands to figure out how that equals six; that to me is five. November 12th to April 15th, I think is five. But there's no place in this process for that.

So ten months isn't magic. The October date isn't magic, but it is consistent with practice within this district, based on the statistics and orders in other cases. And, as we said in our joint status report submission, we believe that this case is more complicated and time intensive than your average drug case that goes on a long time.

Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Schoen.

Ms. Vaughn --

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: -- so obviously the defendant intends to raise a host of arguments. I'm not passing on them right now, of course, but there's a lot of arguments there and some of them are at a minimum unique and complicated.

In light of the fact that this is, I believe, not a case through which the Committee could get information.

In light of the fact that this is a non-detained misdemeanor defendant, why do we have to go so quickly that we would set an April trial date, which would -- I mean, at a minimum it would mean that the briefing on these questions and the determination on these questions would be extremely fast.

I mean, I recognize the government very likely thinks that many of the positions just articulated by Mr. Schoen lack merit. I get that. But I have to give them due consideration. I'm certainly going to be fair about all of them. And they present not just some legal questions but, at least in theory, some questions that could require information. And information and discovery, of course, can be time consuming. So why is April so critical from the government's perspective?

MS. VAUGHN: Your Honor, what is critical from the government's perspective is that the public's right to a speedy trial, which is just as well established and recognized as the defendant's, is respected in this case.

Mr. Corcoran said moments ago that the public has a strong interest in this case being addressed, and the government agrees. So the reason the government thinks that we should move faster than the defendant has proposed is to respect the public's right in the resolution of this case,

which the government submits is particularly strong here, given that the defendant is charged with conduct involving the defiance of the constitutional authority of a coordinate branch of government.

The Supreme Court has said that the purpose of this criminal statute is to vindicate that authority. So allowing this case to languish for eight months before the defendant even files his first motions, in the government's view, does not serve the public's right to a speedy trial or the purposes of the statute.

Second, the issues that Mr. Schoen has raised, first of all it sounds as if they already have a clear understanding of their positions on those issues. I think Mr. Schoen said that he had pages of information there to share with the Court.

Secondly, the discovery that they assert that they need to support those motions, none of which have to do with the merits of the allegations in this case, to be entitled to that discovery, it's well established that the defendant would need to make an initial showing on the merits of the claims for which they think the discovery is necessary to support.

The defendant's burden on issues like that, for example -- I will take the grand jury charge as an example -- is high, and it's a heavy burden. And defendants

rarely meet the burden to be entitled to additional discovery on that.

So the government doesn't see a need to delay filing both the motions to dismiss and within those requiring the defendant to articulate any further discovery he needs and why he is entitled to it; so that on the likelihood that he does not succeed in making the showing that he's entitled to more discovery, the parties and the Court don't have to relitigate the same issues twice.

As I said on the grand jury charge, for example, he has to provide particular proof of irregularity within the grand jury before he is entitled to further discovery on that matter. It is the same with things like selective prosecution or vindictive prosecution.

The government has told the defendant and the Court in its status report it does not plan to voluntarily provide these materials to which he is not entitled under Rule 16, Brady or any other traditional discovery obligations. So he is going to have to move this Court.

Given the high burden he has to meet, the government proposes moving directly to motions to dismiss and accompanying motions to compel, to the extent he has them, as soon as possible. There is no additional work that needs to be done on the front end.

THE COURT: What seems somewhat anomalous to me,

to be honest, is that in the January 6th criminal cases involving the people who were in the Capitol or committed violence in the Capitol, essentially none of those cases has yet gone to trial for indictments that happened in January and February, including for defendants who are actually detained.

And I recognize that there are all sorts of complications in those cases around the scope of discovery and the volume of discovery, but those cases seem in some ways to be -- first of all they are older and second of all they are languishing a little bit. And then on the other hand, this case, which again is a misdemeanor and a non-detained defendant, the government wants to go at light speed.

I'm not suggesting that the public doesn't have a right to a quick and speedy trial, but I also have heard, at least some arguments that will be presented by the defendant that require due consideration. They may potentially require discovery again. Again, I'm not deciding that question here.

It seems to me though, again, that we don't need 10 months to do this. These issues can either be briefed up in a single set of briefs or in, you know, briefs that then perhaps require some additional work for discovery that would happen -- again, I am not deciding that question now.

But 7 months or 8 months from today til trial, rather than 10 months, is still a long time in the arc of a criminal case.

And so this is where I am on the overall proposals by the parties, this is not really -- I am loathe to suggest that I am merely splitting the difference because that's not what I am doing here.

I do think the defendant's proposal for an October trial date is too slow and too long from today. But I also think the government's proposal of an April trial date doesn't reflect adequately, at least the arguments that will be presented, whether they have merit or not, they still need to be decided.

And, frankly, looking at our internal schedule here at the court and my own schedule, both of which are very complicated as a result of having postponed things from COVID and having a number of cases from January 6th stacking up, I think the appropriate thing to do is to try this case in the middle of the summer.

And what I am doing, and what I was doing as we were talking just now, is looking at our internal trial calendar, including my own, to see if there are dates by which or during which we could set a two-week trial calendar. Recognizing that the parties have vastly different views, even about how long the trial might last,

but to be conservative, so to speak, we might as well pick a two-week period so that at a minimum we cover the longest likely trial here.

And to that end, I would like to start this trial on either July 11th or July 18th and have it extend for the next two weeks. That, of course, is subject to counsel and party availability.

Ms. Vaughn, I know the government has said in its papers that it's available any time, but do those weeks work for you and your team?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Mr. Corcoran or Mr. Schoen?

MR. SCHOEN: I think so. I just want to look up one thing, Your Honor, if I might. I am fine with it. It works for me.

MR. CORCORAN: Your Honor, July 18th would work for a two-week block.

THE COURT: So we are going to set trial in this matter to begin July 18th. Jury selection will begin that morning at 9 a.m.

It seems to me that I have enough information in front of me to set a series of dates that would lead up to trial so that it might in the first instance be better for the parties to try one more time, in light of this trial date being look locked in.

I think to some extent the parties were expressing views for shorter or longer pretrial periods, but now having this trial date, the parties to take another crack at negotiating over and proposing a set of motions and other dates leading up to that trial.

Obviously that may not result in agreement, and I will very -- you know, I suspect I will be resolving those questions, but at least we will be focused on getting ready for a July 18th trial.

So absent strenuous objection -- and again, I will calendar this for trial in an order today. But as to the remaining pretrial dates, I would like the parties to meet and confer again and to propose no later than December 16th their respective positions or, of course, agreement if reached on the calendar between today's date and July 18th.

And this conversation/discussion has been very helpful because to the extent that there is disagreement, I don't think I will need to have another hearing. I can just take the parties respective positions and enter an order either December 17th or December 20th. Okay?

Is that clear enough, Ms. Vaughn?

MR. SCHOEN: I'm sorry.

THE COURT: Ms. Vaughn?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes, Your Honor.

Just in anticipation of conferring with the

defendant, does the Court have any views on how much time the Court would like to have to resolve, for example, motions to dismiss in the schedule?

THE COURT: Not particularly. I think as long as there isn't an incredibly short time between the opposition and when the schedule assumes a decision from me, then I think I'm fine. If the reply comes in that period, and if there's going to be a reply, that's just fine. It is an important case, and I intend to resolve the issues as they arise quickly. So I'm not going to sit on things for a month. Basically, if there's a -- whatever the motion is, whether it's a motion to exclude testimony or it's a motion to dismiss. So long as the schedule assumes a few weeks at least between opposition and my determination, that would be good.

Does that answer your question?

MS. VAUGHN: Yes. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: And I welcome reply briefs. They are not critical -- or they don't have to be filed, but I certainly welcome them in almost all cases.

Mr. Schoen, is this all reasonably clear to you and Mr. Corcoran?

MR. SCHOEN: Reasonably clear. I would like to make one remark before we finish, only because I wanted to respond. As Your Honor has recognized over and over, it is

a serious case. I just want to respond to one or two things that were said.

If I were not clear enough in what I said earlier, because I heard Ms. Vaughn say that our motions don't go to the merits of the case, our motions go to the merits of the case. Many of them go directly to the merits of this case and the constitutional issues involved in this case. I want to be clear about that.

I also want to be clear, so there is no misunderstanding, Mr. Bannon and everybody else involved in this case believes very strongly in the public's right to a speedy trial. But maybe even more strongly in the public's right to a fair and full trial, which I know this Court is determined to give in this case.

We have a lot of experience where I come from with very speedy trials, and some very bad results because those trials went really too fast. Anyway, we call this case a misdemeanor, but let's remember, there are four special agents of the FBI assigned to it and three experienced prosecutors. And at the end of the day if, God forbid, there is a conviction, there is a mandatory jail sentence according to the statute in this case. So it's a serious case.

And the last thing I want to say is, we don't take lightly our request for grand jury proceedings of any kind.

But in this case, again, I'm not a betting person and I don't like to -- I don't have a crystal ball, but you know about the old expression of Macy's window. I bet something to do with Macy's window that we are going to meet our burden as to the grand jury's legal instruction in this case.

Because the government itself has said they don't believe advice of counsel applies. We believe advice of counsel, those reliance defenses, absolutely apply. And in this case, they are going to make out a defense of entrapment by estoppel and otherwise. Anyway, I think we will be able to meet our burden getting that grand jury instruction but we will see.

THE COURT: We will.

Ms. Vaughn, anything else from the government's perspective?

MS. VAUGHN: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Mr. Schoen, anything else from the defendant's perspective or Mr. Corcoran?

MR. SCHOEN: No, Your Honor. Thank you so much for the time.

MR. CORCORAN: No. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Counsel, so we will deal with the protective order. We will enter the order or calendar the trial, and then we will look for a status report from the

parties by December 16th. Thank you, Counsel. MR. SCHOEN: Your Honor didn't meet Mr. Costello the last time. Your Honor has just signed an order pro hac vice-ing him in, if that's a verb. And so I wanted --Mr. Costello is on the call. I just wanted Your Honor to meet Mr. Costello. THE COURT: Yes. I believe Ms. Harris recognized him earlier but welcome, Mr. Costello. MR. COSTELLO: Thank you, Your Honor. MR. SCHOEN: Thank you, Ms. Harris. You did an admirable job filling in. THE COURT: Thank you, Counsel. MS. VAUGHN: Thank you, Your Honor. (Proceedings concluded at 12:03 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE

I, Lorraine T. Herman, Official Court

Reporter, certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

Please Note: This hearing occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and is therefore subject to the technological limitations of court reporting remotely.

14 <u>December 7, 2021</u>
DATE

/s/

Lorraine T. Herman

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