



## FEATURE: Impeachment: week in review

A weekly one paragraph summary report and analysis, followed by recaps (with links) of representative on-line articles and essays – typically 800 to 1,600 words.

Week ending 2/25/2018 (~1,010 words)

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Contact: [MeetToImpeach@gmail.com](mailto:MeetToImpeach@gmail.com)

**Minneapolis 2/26/18 Edition** – In the wake of Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s recent indictments of thirteen Russian nationals, Mueller followed up this week with both additional indictments of former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, and a guilty plea from Manafort’s associate Richard Gates. There is speculation that Gates may implicate Manafort as part of a plea bargain – in addition, Gates -- who continued with the Trump campaign through the election and into the transition -- has been involved in many meetings and conversations with many people. A consensus seems to have emerged that the substance of the current indictments of the Russian nationals is unlikely to lead to much, especially since everyone is in Russia and unlikely to be extradited. Although Trump criticized his National Security advisor, H.R. McMaster for saying there was “incontrovertible” evidence of Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign, that furor seems to have died down, partly because McMasters is thought by many to be needed in his current role.

Longtime Trump-tracking journalist David Cay Johnston is actively promoting his new book: It's Even Worse Than You Think: What the Trump Administration is Doing to America. The substantive basis for this book builds on thirty years of Mr. Johnston’s reporting on Mr. Trump – we’re likely to hear more from Mr. Johnston going forward.

## The Mueller Investigation

[NY Times chief White House correspondent Peter Baker reports](#) the Mueller Investigation appears to be gaining steam, writing: "Mr. Trump and his advisers insist they are not worried because so far none of the charges implicate the president. Yet... the flurry of recent action seems to be inexorably leading to a larger target.... In the last 10 days, Mr. Mueller has indicted 13 Russians and three Russian companies on suspicion of secretly trying to help Mr. Trump win the election, added new charges against Paul Manafort, who was Mr. Trump's campaign chairman, and secured a guilty plea from a lawyer tied to Mr. Manafort's business dealings with pro-Russian figures. The guilty plea on Friday by Rick Gates, the former deputy chairman, raised the pressure on Mr. Manafort." However, after an extensive review of actions by the Mueller Investigation, Baker concludes by quoting Benjamin Wittes, editor in chief of the legal analysis blog Lawfare: "The basic contours of the puzzle is that [Mueller has] constructed his actions in a way that we don't know where it's leading, and that's on purpose."

After the announcement of Mueller's indictments of thirteen Russian nationals, President Trump criticized his National Security Advisor, H.R. McMaster, for saying there was "incontrovertible" evidence of Russian meddling in the 2016 election. However, in the wake of that recent and open clash between President Trump and McMaster, [Taylor Dinerman opines in National Review](#) that overall, McMaster has been a stabilizing influence in the Trump Administration. Dinerman suggests that McMaster has performed well under difficult circumstances. Dinerman does not appear to foresee McMaster's imminent departure from the administration -- others are not so sure.

[The New York Times offers an assessment](#) of the Democrat's "rebuttal memo", released about three weeks after a GOP House Intelligence Committee memo was released February 2nd, regarding FISA warrants the FBI obtained to conduct surveillance on former Trump campaign advisor Carter Page. Unlike the Republican memo, which was declassified in its entirety, the Democratic memo is redacted. However, it appears to substantively undermine several GOP claims -- in particular, establishing that only "narrow parts" of the "Steele Dossier" were involved in the FISA warrant issue, that adequate disclosure was made regarding the possible agenda behind the "Steele Dossier," and that Carter Page had been of interest to the FBI years before the first in the current series of warrants was issued late in 2016.

## Book Beat

Longtime Trump-tracking and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist David Cay Johnston has a [new book out on Trump: It's Even Worse Than You Think: What the Trump Administration is Doing to America](#), available on Amazon as hardcover and kindle. Major topics include: The Wall -- America will pay for it if it's every built; Climate Change -- and a broader across the board knee-capping of federal regulation; and "the Kleptocracy" -- a loosing of "political termites into our government" and a general, metastasizing across the board tendency of "the Washington swamp" to consolidate the grip of special interest tentacles throughout the fabric of our society. Johnson's next-most-recent book was [The Making of Donald Trump](#) -- an extensive expose of his business and political activities published in August 2016 -- in time to alert general election voters, but unfortunately too late to influence the nominating process. Johnson first began reporting on Donald Trump when Trump began his involvement in Atlantic City Casinos - - he recounts being surprised then to find -- based on some carefully formulated "trick" questions -- that Trump knew almost nothing about the casino business. Johnston also makes it clear that his questions led him to conclude early on that Trump exhibited basic characteristics of his current characterization, as stated on [MSNBC's AM Joy](#): "he's a con artist -- he's a fraud."

David Cay Johnston argues in an [MSNBC interview on youtube](#) that the biggest worry President Trump may have about the Mueller Investigation is money. Johnston said Trump "has been involved with Russian money going back to the late 80's." Johnston cites Trump's lawsuit-plagued Manhattan SoHo project, and reports the profits "disappeared in a deal Donald signed off on, and he was an 18% owner of the project, into an Icelandic bank that was under the thumb of one of the Russian oligarchs. And that's clearly what Donald is really worried about here." The SoHo project involved Felix Sater (sometimes spelled Satter,) described by Financial Times as: "a Russian-born dealmaker with organized-crime connections." Sater is a long-time Trump associate.

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