

Trump's Former Campaign Chief Manafort Jailed After Charges of Witness Tampering

A federal judge on Friday sent President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, to jail pending trial, after Special Counsel Robert Mueller charged him last week with witness tampering.

It was the latest episode in the fall of Manafort, a longtime political operator and businessman who has been a focus of Mueller's investigation into Russia's role in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson in Washington revoked Manafort's bail, sending him to jail.

"I have no appetite for this. But in the end, I cannot turn a blind eye," she said. "You've abused the trust placed in you."

Manafort has been indicted by Mueller in both Washington and Virginia on a raft of charges, including conspiracy against the United States. His trial in the Washington case is scheduled for September. He had remained on home confinement in Alexandria, Virginia, and had been required to wear an electronic monitoring device.

Manafort's trial on the related charges in Virginia is set for July 25. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Mueller, whose investigation has overshadowed Trump's presidency, is investigating whether the president's 2016 campaign colluded with Moscow and whether Trump has unlawfully sought to obstruct the Russia probe. Trump has called Mueller's investigation a witch hunt and has denied wrongdoing.

Jackson had previously rebuffed Manafort's repeated requests to end his home confinement in exchange for pledging \$10 million in real estate as collateral.

A June 8 indictment charged Manafort and Konstantin Kilimnik, a Manafort aide and political operative with alleged ties to Russian intelligence, with tampering with witnesses about their past lobbying for Ukraine's former pro-Russian government.

The indictment accused Manafort and Kilimnik of attempting to call, text and send encrypted messages in February to two people from a political discussion group – the so-called Hapsburg Group – that Manafort worked with to promote Ukraine's interests in a bid to sway their testimony.

Mueller's team this month asked the judge to revoke Manafort's bail, saying his "obstructive" conduct "instills little confidence that restrictions short of detention will assure Manafort's compliance with the court's orders and prevent him from committing further crimes."

Manafort has long-standing ties to a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine and a Russian oligarch close to the Kremlin.

The charges against Manafort in Washington include conspiracy to launder money, conspiracy to defraud the United States and failing to register as a foreign agent for the pro-Russia Ukrainian government under former President Viktor Yanukovich.

None of the charges against make reference to alleged Russian interference in the election nor the accusations of collusion between Moscow and Trump's campaign. The Kremlin has denied meddling in the election. {eoa}

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