

Here's how Manafort indictment could be leverage for prosecutors in Russia probe - The Boston Globe

By [Travis Andersen](#) Globe Staff October 30, 2017

Legal experts said Monday that the indictments of former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and his associate Rick Gates are just a prelude to what could be a push by special counsel Robert Mueller to get members of Trump's circle to sing for prosecutors looking into his campaign's possible collusion with Russia.

The indictments "have nothing to do with Trump, and they have everything to do with Trump," said noted defense lawyer Alan Dershowitz. "The purpose of going after [Manafort] is obviously to get leverage, to get him to flip, to get him to become a witness."

Dershowitz, who has [publicly defended](#) Trump's right to due process, said investigators can now hang the prospect of a lengthy prison term over Manafort's head in an effort to get him to play ball.

Prosecutors, Dershowitz said, will likely urge Manafort to "tell us everything you learned while you were campaign manager. . . . If you don't know anything about Trump, tell us something about Jared [Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and adviser]. Tell us something about somebody who's close to Trump. And then we'll get him or her, and after the fifth or sixth domino, we'll get to the Big Cheese."

The tactic can become an abuse of prosecutorial power if cooperating witnesses start lying, Dershowitz cautioned.

"Sometimes the guy's not only willing to sing, he's willing to compose," he said. "He's prepared to make the story better than it is" to help himself.

The retired Harvard Law professor and one-time O.J. Simpson lawyer spoke to the Globe hours after word broke that Manafort and Gates had been indicted on 12 counts, including conspiracy to defraud the United States, conspiracy to launder money, acting as an unregistered foreign agent, and several charges related to failing to report foreign bank and financial accounts.

The government alleges Manafort and Gates moved money through hidden bank accounts in Cyprus, St. Vincent, and the Grenadines and the Seychelles. In total, more than \$75 million flowed through the accounts. Manafort is accused of laundering more than \$18 million, according to the indictment.

Mueller's move to indict Manafort suggests that if Manafort has talked at any point during the Russia campaign probe, the feds believe he's holding something back, according to R. Michael Cassidy, a Boston College Law professor and former public corruption prosecutor.

"I think it suggests that either 1) Manafort is not cooperating, or 2) Manafort gave a proffer to the Special Counsels office that the prosecutor rejected as incomplete or unsatisfactory," Cassidy wrote in an e-mail. In a proffer, a defendant tells prosecutors what he is willing to testify to so prosecutors can evaluate whether to give the defendant some kind of break.

"Manafort and or Gates may decide to cooperate after the indictment, especially now that they are looking at significant penalties if convicted," he said.

A third defendant is also apparently in the government's crosshairs.

George Papadopoulos, a former campaign aide to Trump, pleaded guilty Oct. 5 to one count of lying to FBI agents about the nature of his interactions with "foreign nationals" who he thought had close connections to senior Russian government officials. The plea was unsealed Monday.

Trump aides have said Papadopoulos played a limited role in the campaign and had no access to Trump.

Could Mueller's latest moves be checkmated by a pardon or commutation from the president?

Not likely, at least in Manafort's case, according to Martin G. Weinberg, a prominent Boston defense lawyer who has tried many public corruption cases.

Weinberg, while stressing that Manafort is presumed innocent under the law, said the charges made public Monday allege "significant criminal activity" going back several years before Trump ran for president.

"Pardoning Manafort either before trial or, if convicted, for crimes that had nothing to do with politics or the election would be very difficult," Weinberg said. "The political implications would be toxic."

Trump, for his part, has adamantly denied that his campaign colluded with Russia, and his Twitter response to Manafort's indictment was characteristically combative.

"Sorry, but this is years ago, before Paul Manafort was part of the Trump campaign," Trump tweeted. "But why aren't Crooked Hillary & the Dems the focus?????Also, there is NO COLLUSION!"

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Travis Andersen can be reached at travis.andersen@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @TAGlobe.