

A for-profit war

In his August 21, 2017, speech on the war in Afghanistan, Trump said “we are going to participate in economic development to help defray the cost of this war to us.”

He was talking about Afghanistan’s estimated \$1 trillion in minerals and elements that remain in the ground.

On the 8/24/2017 edition of “The Rachel Maddow Show,” Maddow interviewed Laurel Miller, former Acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, about Trump’s idea.

It would be “potentially harmful to national security interests just for American officials to be talking about this,” Miller said.

“This idea creates an excellent propaganda talking point for the Taliban because it will enable the Taliban to reinforce their narrative that the Afghan government is a puppet regime of the United States.”

Miller said Afghanistan is still one of the poorest countries in the world.

“There’s also the potential for this idea to be damaging to the Afghan government if its seen as selling out Afghan resources that should be for the benefit of the Afghan people to America, and that could have a destabilizing effect on what is a chronically weak government,” Miller said.

Maddow noted that Politico.com has since reported that Trump has put “Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in charge of examining any potential investment opportunities for the United States in Afghanistan.”

See the full segment at <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/trump-helps-taliban-with-talk-of-looting-afghanistan-minerals-1032124995659>

Read the full Politico.com article at <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/22/trump-afghanistan-generals-241886>

Pardon ping pong could be coming

On July 21, 2017, the Washington Post reported that Trump had “asked his advisers about his power to pardon aides, family members and even himself in connection with the (Russia) probe, according to one of those people.” (See https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-lawyers-seek-to-undercut-muellers-russia-investigation/2017/07/20/232ebf2c-6d71-11e7-b9e2-2056e768a7e5_story.html?utm_term=.7284cbc0057b for the full article.)

On the 8/24/2017 edition of “The Last Word With Lawrence O’Donnell,” O’Donnell interviewed former assistant Watergate prosecutor, Jill Wine-Banks, about presidential pardons.

“When you accept a pardon, you are admitting to guilt,” Wine-Banks said.

“Once you are pardoned, you cannot protect yourself through the Fifth Amendment, and that means that all of those people that have the most knowledge of what President Trump may have done would

have to testify. ... They would face prison for either perjury or for obstruction by not answering questions,” Wine-Banks said.

The next day, Trump pardoned Joe Arpaio, which was seen by many as Trump’s way of telling people under subpoena by Robert Mueller’s investigation that the president will pardon them.

Wine-Banks had more to say about presidential pardons on “All in with Chris Hayes” that same day, 8/25/2017:

“I think by now the president is aware that if he pardons these people pre-emptively that they can then be forced to testify against him. So if he pardons anyone who knows anything about his role in obstruction of justice or in working with the Russians, they will no longer have a Fifth Amendment right if they have been pardoned, and they can, therefore, be compelled to testify. So, he (Trump) could, I suppose, then have them either refuse to testify and be held in contempt ... and then he’ll pardon them again. It is so contrary to everything our Constitution stands for.”

See <http://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/watch/trump-w-h-pressed-on-pardon-philosophy-amid-russia-probe-1032083523518> for the full 8/24/2017 segment.

The segment in which Wine-Banks made her second comment on an 8/25/2017 segment of “All In with Chris Hayes, is not yet available on the Internet.