

# What Cicero Would Say about Roger Stone

In his speech before the Roman Senate, when he accused Catiline of conspiracy to overthrow the state, Cicero famously proclaimed, “O ye immortal gods, where on earth are we? In what city are we living? What constitution is ours?”

A former Latin teacher, I thought of those words when I read the news online on January 25, 2018.

Before dawn on this same morning, a dozen armed FBI agents—some sources describe some of the agents carrying “heavy weapons—pounded on the door of a home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, shouting “FBI! Open up!”

The home belongs to Roger Stone, former casino lobbyist and campaign adviser to President Donald Trump. A grand jury had earlier indicted Stone on several charges, including lying about his communications with WikiLeaks during the 2016 campaign.

Meanwhile, CNN was there to film the pre-dawn arrest. Denying the network had been tipped off by the arresting agents, the network said that it was a “reporter’s instinct” that led the camera crew to Stone’s home. That claim certainly reflects poorly on the reporter’s colleagues from around the country, all of whom were doubtless asleep in their beds.

Now some questions:

Why did it take a dozen armed agents to arrest Mr. Stone? Did they expect him to come out with pistols blazing, yelling as in some 1930s movie, “You’ll never take me alive, coppers!” Were they trying to prevent his suicide? Unlikely. Mr. Stone

has said for days he might well be indicted by the grand jury, hardly the take of a fearful or despairing man.

And why a pre-dawn raid? Why not just knock on the door at mid-morning and say, "Mr. Stone, you are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney, and to have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be provided for you at government expense." Did the FBI think Mr. Stone might otherwise slip out the back door and head for Mexico? Did they think he might try to hide under the bed? What?

And what about the CNN crew? The story that it was a "reporter's instinct," aroused by unusual activity of the grand jury, seems weak. Wouldn't other reporters know about such activity? Besides, isn't the work of a grand jury supposed to take place under lock and key? What was the unusual activity the reporter spotted? How did that reporter, supposedly barred from the premises, conclude that a raid would take place on Mr. Stone's house at a particular hour on a particular day?

These Keystone Cop maneuvers would be humorous in a comedy on the big screen. But you won't hear too many people laughing for three reasons.

First, the FBI is already under fire for its part in the charade of the last three years. It has lost the trust of many citizens. When the agency pulls stunts like this one, that distrust only deepens.

And once again, those who suspect collusion between the "deep state" and the media have evidence to support that opinion. Whether CNN really relied on a reporter's instincts or whether the network was tipped off won't matter to many observers.

They will assume that sources at the FBI or some other agency called CNN and told them to be at Mr. Stone's house.

Finally, what does such an outlandish operation say about the state of our premier law enforcement agency and about those who ordered such an assault? What were these people thinking? The time of day, the use of force, and the presence of the media smack of Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia, not the United States of America.

Is Mr. Stone guilty of his alleged crimes?

We don't know.

What we do know is that we have just witnessed one more disgraceful exhibition of the power of the state. And like Cicero, we might wonder: "Where on earth are we?"

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