

Barr, Mueller trade barbs as Russia probe rift goes public

AG testifies
in the Senate

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Private tensions between Justice Department leaders and special counsel Robert Mueller’s team broke into public view in extraordinary fashion Wednesday as Attorney General William Barr pushed back at the special counsel’s “snitty” complaints over his handling of the Trump-Russia investigation report.

Testifying for the first time since releasing Mueller’s report, Barr faced sharp questioning from Senate Democrats who accused him of making misleading comments and seeming at times to be President Donald Trump’s protector as much as the country’s top law enforcement official.

The rift fueled allegations that Barr has spun Mueller’s findings in Trump’s favor and understated the gravity of Trump’s behavior. The dispute is certain to persist, as Democrats push to give Mueller a chance to answer Barr’s testimony with his own later this month.

Barr separately informed

the House Judiciary Committee that he would not appear for its scheduled hearing on Thursday because of the panel’s insistence that he be questioned by committee lawyers as well as lawmakers. That refusal sets the stage for Barr to possibly be held in contempt of Congress.

At Wednesday’s Senate Judiciary Committee session, Barr said he had been surprised Mueller did not reach a conclusion on whether Trump had tried to obstruct justice, and that he had felt compelled to step in with his own judgment that the president had committed no crime.

“I’m not really sure of his reasoning,” Barr said of Mueller’s obstruction analysis, which neither accused the president of a crime nor exonerated him. If Mueller felt that he shouldn’t make a decision on whether to bring charges, Barr added, “then he shouldn’t have investigated. That was the time to pull up.”

Barr was also perturbed by a private letter Mueller, a longtime friend, sent him last month complaining that the attorney general had not properly portrayed the special counsel’s findings in a four-page letter summarizing the report’s main conclusions. The attorney general



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik
Attorney General William Barr is sworn in to testify before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday.

called the note “a bit snitty.”

“I said ‘Bob, what’s with the letter? Just pick up the phone and call me if there is an issue,’” Barr said.

The airing of disagreements was all the more striking since the Justice Department leadership and Mueller’s team had appeared unified in approach for most of the two-year investigation into potential coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 election.

The revelation that Mueller, who’d been publicly silent for the entire investigation, was agitated enough to send a letter to Barr — which could, and did, become public — lent his words extra credibility with Democrats, who accused Barr of lying under oath last month when he denied that Mueller’s team was unhappy with how their work had been characterized.

Barr downplayed the special counsel’s complaints, saying they were mostly about process, not substance, while raising a few objections of his own in the other direction. He said that Mueller did not, as requested, identify grand jury material in his report when he submitted it, slowing the public release of the

report as the Justice Department worked to black out sensitive information.

“His concern was he wanted more out,” Barr said. He said Mueller did not say that Barr had inaccurately characterized the investigation.

Barr also insisted that once Mueller submitted his report, his work was done and the document became “my baby.”

“It was my decision how and when to make it public,” Barr said. “Not Bob Mueller’s.”

Wednesday’s contentious Senate hearing gave Barr his most extensive opportunity to date to defend recent Justice Department actions, including a press conference before the report’s release and his decision to release a brief summary letter two days after getting the report.

But the hearing, which included three Democratic presidential candidates, also laid bare the partisan divide over the handling of Mueller’s report.

Some Republicans, in addition to defending Trump, focused on the president’s 2016 Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton’s email and campaign practices and what they argued has been a lack of investigation of them.

As the hearing was getting underway, Trump tweeted his familiar “NO COLLUSION, NO OBSTRUCTION.” Though Mueller reached no conclusion on obstruction, he did report that his probe established no criminal conspiracy between the Trump team and Russia. Barr asserted that Trump was “falsely accused” during the investigation and that the president therefore lacked the criminal intent required to commit obstruction.

“I didn’t exonerate. I said that we did not believe that there was sufficient evidence to establish an obstruction offense which is the job of the Justice Department, and the job of the Justice Department is now over,” Barr said.

Democrats, for their part, moved to exploit the daylight between Barr and Mueller to impugn the attorney general’s credibility. Some also called for Barr to resign, or to recuse himself from Justice Department investigations that have been spun off from Mueller’s probe.

“I think the American public can see quite well that you are biased in this situation and you have not been objective and that would arguably be a conflict of interest,” said Sen. Kamala Harris, of California, one of the Democratic contenders for president.

THE DAILY ASTORIAN TV SCHEDULE														Evening listings THURSDAY	
THURSDAY EVENING														MAY 2	
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30		
2 KATU	2	KATU News at 6 (N)		Jeopardy! (N)	Wheel of Fortune	Grey's A. "What I Did for Love" (N)		Station 19 "Always Ready" Pt. 2 of 2 (N)		For the People "Moral Suasion" (N)		News (N)	(35) Jimmy Kimmel		
3 KOMO	4	KOMO 4 News at 6pm (N)		Wheel of Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Grey's A. "What I Did for Love" (N)		Station 19 "Always Ready" Pt. 2 of 2 (N)		For the People "Moral Suasion" (N)		KOMO4News (N)	(35) Jimmy Kimmel		
5 KING	5	NBC News (N)	KING 5 News (N)	KING 5 News (N)	Evening	Superstore (N)	A.P. Bio (N)	Brooklyn 99 (N)	Abby's (N)	Law & Order: S.V.U. "Diss" (N)		KING 5 News (N)	(35) Tonight Show		
6 KOIN	7	KOIN Local 6 (N)	Evening News (N)	Extra	Ent. Tonight (N)	The Big Bang (N)	Young Sheldon (N)	Mom (N)	Life in Pieces (N)	S.W.A.T. "Day of Dread" (N)		KOIN6News (N)	(35) Colbert		
7 KIRO	7	KIRO 7 News (N)	Evening News (N)	KIRO 7 News (N)	Ent. Tonight (N)	The Big Bang (N)	Young Sheldon (N)	Mom (N)	Life in Pieces (N)	S.W.A.T. "Day of Dread" (N)		KIRO 7 News (N)	(35) Colbert		
8 KGW	7	KGW News at 6:00 p.m. (N)		Tonight Cassidy	Inside Edition	Superstore (N)	A.P. Bio (N)	Brooklyn 99 (N)	Abby's (N)	Law & Order: S.V.U. "Diss" (N)		News (N)	(35) Tonight Show		
9 KRCW	3	Modern Family	Modern Family	The Goldbergs	The Goldbergs	iZombie "Thug Death" (SP) (N)		In the Dark "The Feels" (N)		News (N)	Friends	Two and a Half	Two and a Half		
10 KOPB	10	Expeditions	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour (N)		Oregon Art Beat	Oregon Guide	Midsomer M.	(45) Midsomer M.	Written in the Stars	Masterpiece Mystery!	Endeavour: Quartet			
12 KPTV	12	6 O'Clock News (N)		Family Feud (N)	Family Feud (N)	Miss USA Pageant	Hopefuls from all 50 states and D.C. compete. (N)			10 O'Clock News (N)	News (N)	Page Six TV			
18 KPDX	18	Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	8pm Prime News (N)		9pm Prime News (N)		Big Bang Theory	Family Guy	American Dad!	The Game		
20 KCPQ	13	Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Miss USA Pageant	Hopefuls from all 50 states and D.C. compete. (N)			Q13 NEWS AT 10 (N)		News (N)	The Simpsons		
21 TBS	20	Family Guy	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Conan	Seinfeld		
25 KZJO	22	Black-ish	Black-ish	Mom	Modern Family	Mom	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9 (N)		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Two and a Half	Two and a Half		
29 ESPN	29	(5:00) NBA Basketball Playoffs (L)		NBA Basketball Playoffs (L)		NBA Basketball Playoffs (L)				SportsCenter With Scott Van Pelt (N)		SportsCenter (N)			
30 ESPN2	30	Boxing Classics		Boxing Classics		SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter (N)		UFC Unleashed "Cerrone vs. Story" (N)		NBA Basketball Playoffs			
31 NICK	31	The Loud House	The Loud House	The Loud House	Dude Perfect	★ Spy Kids 2: Island of Lost Dreams (20) ★★ Daybreakers (2009, Action) Ethan Hawke, Harriet Minto-Day, Jay Laga'aia.		Alexa Vega, Antonio Banderas.		Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends		
32 DISN	32	Jessie	Coop & Cami	Jessie	Jessie	Sydney to the Max	Sydney to the Max	Jessie	Jessie	Sydney to the Max	Coop & Cami	Andi Mack	Raven's Home		
34 FAM	34	(5:00) ★★ National Treasure ('04, Adv) Diane Kruger, Justin Bartha, Nicolas Cage.				Marvel's Cloak & Dagger "B Sides" (N)		★ Sweet Home Alabama ('02) Candice Bergen, Josh Lucas, Reese Witherspoon.				The 700 Club			
35 FMC	35	(4:30) Poltergeist (25) Poltergeist ('15, Hor) Rosemarie DeWitt, Sam Rockwell.				(20) ★★ Daybreakers (2009, Action) Ethan Hawke, Harriet Minto-Day, Jay Laga'aia.				(20) ★★ Daybreakers (2009, Action) Ethan Hawke, Harriet Minto-Day, Jay Laga'aia.		(05) Women (N) / (15) Little Women: LA			
36 LIFE	36	Celeb Wife "Plaxico Burress/ DJ Paul"		LW Atlanta "Show Up and Show Out"		Little Women "On the Dotted Line" (N)		LW Atlanta "Why You Mad Sis?" (N)		(05) Little Women: LA "Little Issues" (N)		(05) Women (N) / (15) Little Women: LA			
38 ROOT	38	Motocross X-Fighters		Crashed Ice		Cliff Diving		Arenacross		WSL "WCT: Gold Coast - Australia"		PBA Bowling			
39 FS1	39	PBA Bowling Playoffs				MLB Whiparound (L)		TMZ Sports (N)	Fair Game	Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.					
43 SPIKE	43	Mom	Mom	Mom	Mom	Mom	Mom	Wife Swap "McCormick vs. Muffley" (N)		★ Step Brothers (2008, Comedy) John C. Reilly, Richard Jenkins, Will Ferrell.					
44 COM	44	(15) The Office	(50) The Office "PDA"	(25) The Office		The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office 1/2	The Office 2/2	The Daily Show (N) (35) South Park			
45 HIST	45	Swamp People "Night Terrors"		Swamp People "Wild Wild Swamp"		Swamp People "Legends of the Swamp"		Swamp "Rolling with the Punches" (N)		(05) Farm "Chasing the Dream" (N)		(05) Swamp People "Wild Wild Swamp"			
46 A&E	46	(5:00) Live PD				Live PD "Overtime" (N)		Live PD "Most Wanted Live" (N)		Dating App Horrors (N)		(05) KdsBhndBarsLifeProle "Aaron"			
47 TLC	47	Say Yes-Dress	Say Yes-Dress	Say Yes-Dress	Say Yes-Dress	My 600-lb Life "Cillas' Story" Cillas' food		addiction may cost him his family. (N)		Untold Stories "Couch Creature"		Untold Stories "Frat Boy Blues"			
48 DISC	48	Naked and Afraid "The Jungle Curse"		Naked and Afraid: Pop-Up Edition		Naked and Afraid: Pop-Up Edition (N)		Naked & Afraid "Colombia Jungle" (N)		Naked and Afraid "African Savannah"		NakedAndAfraid "Category Five Survival"			
49 NGE0	49	Wild Chile "Ends of the Earth"		Peru's Hidden Rainforest		Life Below Zero "New Territory"		Life Below Zero "Facing Fears"		Life Below Zero "To Catch a King"		StarTalk "Weird Al Yankovic" (N)			
50 TNT	50	Bones "The Graft in the Girl"		Bones "The Soldier on the Grave"		★ S.W.A.T. (2003, Action) Colin Farrell, Michelle Rodriguez, Samuel L. Jackson.				★ Red 2 (2013, Action) Helen Mirren, Bruce Willis.					
51 AMC	51	(5:00) ★★ U.S. Marshals ('98) Tommy Lee Jones, Robert Downey Jr., Wesley Snipes.				★ Escape Plan (2013, Action) Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jim Caviezel, Sylvester Stallone.				(35) ★★ Escape Plan ('13) Sylvester Stallone.					
52 USA	52	(4:00) NHL Hockey (L)		NCIS "Recovery"		NCIS "Phoenix"		NCIS "Blast From the Past"		NCIS "Lockdown"		NCIS "Family First"			
53 FOOD	53	Beat Bobby Play	Beat Bobby Play	Chopped "Viewers' Choice Ingredients"		Chopped "Viewers' Baskets"		Chopped "Viewers Rule"		Beat Bobby Play (N)		Beat Bobby Play	Beat Bobby Play		
54 HGTV	54	Caribbean Life	Caribbean Life	Caribbean Life	Caribbean Life	Beachfront Hunt	Beachfront Hunt	FlipFloVegas (N)	Flip or Flop Vegas	House Hunters (N)	House Hunters (N)	House Hunters	House Hunters		
56 FX	56	(4:30) 22 Jump Street Channing Tatum.		★★ The Avengers (2012, Action) Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Robert Downey Jr..						Better Things (N)		Better Things	22 Jump Street		
57 CNN	57	Cuomo Prime Time		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		Anderson Cooper 360		Cuomo Prime Time		CNN Tonight With Don Lemon			
58 FNC	58	Hannity		The Ingraham Angle		Fox News @ Night		Tucker Carlson Tonight		Hannity		The Ingraham Angle			
61 CNBC	61	Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Paid Program	Paid Program		
63 BRAV	63	(5:30) Tiny House	Tiny House Nation	Project Runway	"Elegance Is the New Black"	Project Runway	"Blame it on Rio" (N)			Don't Be Tardy...		Watch What (N)	Project Runway		
64 TCM	64	(5:00) ★★ Since You Went Away ('44) Jennifer Jones, Claudette Colbert.		(15) ★★ Mrs. Miniver (1942, War) Walter Pidgeon, Teresa Wright, Greer Garson.						(45) ★★ Happy Land ('43, Dra) Frances Dee, Don Ameche.					
65 SYFY	65	(5:00) ★★ Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1 ('10) Daniel Radcliffe.		(15) ★★ Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 (2011, Adventure) Emma Watson, Rupert Grint, Daniel Radcliffe.						(05) Happy! "Pervapalooza"					
162 RFD	162	Chasing-Madison	Small Town	Rural America "Live" (N)		Steve Lantvit	Rural News (N)	Grown	Farm Monitor	Chasing-Madison	Small Town	Time Life Library			

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