

Trump commutes Stone’s prison sentence

By JILL COLVIN and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has commuted the sentence of his longtime political confidant Roger Stone, intervening in extraordinary fashion in a criminal case that was central to the Russia investigation and that concerned the president’s own conduct.

The move came Friday, just days before Stone was to begin serving a 40-month prison sentence for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump’s campaign colluded with Russia to win the 2016 election.

The action, which Trump had foreshadowed in recent days, underscores the president’s lingering rage over special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation and is part of a continuing effort by the president and his administration to rewrite the narrative of a probe that has shadowed the White House from the outset. Democrats, already alarmed by the Justice Department’s earlier dismissal of the case against Trump’s first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, denounced the president as further undermining the rule of law.

Stone, 67, had been set to report to prison on Tuesday after a federal appeals court rejected his bid to postpone his surrender date. But he told The Associated Press that Trump called him Friday evening to tell him he was off the hook.

“The president told me that he had decided, in an act of clemency, to issue a full



Cliff Owen/AP Photo

Roger Stone was set to serve a 40-month prison sentence before President Donald Trump commuted his sentence on Friday.

commutation of my sentence, and he urged me to vigorously pursue my appeal and my vindication,” Stone said by phone from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he was celebrating with friends. He said he had to change rooms because there were “too many people opening bottles of Champagne here.”

Although a commutation does not nullify Stone’s felony convictions, it protects him from serving prison time as a result.

The move is another extraordinary intervention by Trump in the nation’s justice system and underscores anew his willingness to flout the norms and standards that have governed presidential conduct for decades. As Trump stares down a coronavirus pandemic that has worsened his chances for reelection, he has been more willing than ever to test the limits of his power.

Democrats denounced Trump’s action. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Saturday called it “an act of staggering corruption,” saying

legislation is needed to prevent a president from pardoning or commuting the sentence of someone who acted to shield that president from prosecution.

House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff called it “offensive to the rule of law and principles of justice. Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez asked, “Is there any power Trump won’t abuse?”

Sen. Mitt Romney, a Utah Republican, also condemned the move. “Unprecedented, historic corruption: an American president commutes the sentence of a person convicted by a jury of lying to shield that very president,” he tweeted Saturday.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a statement that Stone was a “victim of the Russia Hoax that the Left and its allies in the media perpetuated for years in an attempt to undermine the Trump presidency.”

Stone had been open about his desire for a pardon or commutation, appealing for the president’s help in

a monthslong television and social media campaign and seeking to postpone his surrender date by months after getting a brief extension from the judge, in part by citing the coronavirus.

Trump, who had made clear in recent days that he was inching closer to acting, had repeatedly publicly inserted himself into Stone’s case, including just before Stone’s sentencing.

That earned a public rebuke from his own attorney general, William Barr, who said the president’s comments were “making it impossible” for him to do his job. Barr was so incensed that he told people he was considering resigning over the matter.

“With this commutation, Trump makes clear that there are two systems of justice in America: one for his criminal friends, and one for everyone else,” Schiff said. “Donald Trump, Bill Barr, and all those who enable them pose the gravest of threats to the rule of law.”

Stone, a larger-than-life political character who embraced his reputation as a dirty trickster, was the sixth Trump aide or adviser to have been convicted of charges brought during Mueller’s investigation.

A longtime Trump friend and informal adviser, Stone boasted during the campaign that he was in contact with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange through a trusted intermediary and hinted at inside knowledge of WikiLeaks’ plans to release more than 19,000 emails hacked from the servers of the Democratic National Committee.

Lower Columbia splits low-scoring twinbill at Centralia

The Astorian

The Lower Columbia Baseball Club and Centralia split a pair of low-scoring American Legion games Sunday afternoon at Fort Borst Park in Centralia, Washington.

Centralia held off Lower Columbia 3-2 in Game 1, before Lower Columbia managed a 1-0 win in the second game.

Centralia held a 1-0 lead through four innings of the opener, before Lower Columbia pushed across one run in the top of the fifth, then another in the sixth to take a one-run lead into the bottom of the seventh.

That’s when Centralia rapped out four straight singles to score two runs, with a bases-loaded infield grounder providing the game-winner.

Lower Columbia had just four hits, including a double by Warrenton’s Austin Little. Astoria’s Dylan Rush went the distance on the mound, giving up just three hits through six innings before Centralia’s four-hit outburst in the seventh.

The nightcap was

another low-scoring contest, with neither team able to score through five innings.

Lower Columbia finally pushed across a run in the sixth, when Warrenton’s Jake Morrow drew a lead-off walk, took second on a single by Wahkiakum’s Ashden Niemeyer, and advanced to third on a single to right by Naselle’s Ethan Lindstrom.

Morrow scored on another single to right by Kelso’s Tanner Davis for the game’s only run.

On the mound, St. Helens’s Kaleb Edwards started and pitched five solid innings, scattering five hits with one strikeout and no walks.

Little pitched a scoreless sixth and seventh, giving up just two hits and no walks with two strikeouts.

After a doubleheader Monday in Keizer, Lower Columbia (now 14-3 overall) will play six straight games at Astoria’s Ernie Aiken Field.

Lower Columbia hosts the Vancouver Mavericks on Friday, followed by doubleheaders July 19 and July 22.

SCOREBOARD

SPORTS SCHEDULE	SATURDAY
TUESDAY Junior Baseball — Warrenton at Ilwaco (2), 4:30 p.m. at Long Beach city park	Junior Baseball — At Ernie Aiken Field: Tillamook vs. Warrenton, 11 a.m.; Neah-Kah-Nie vs. Warrenton, 2 p.m.; Neah-Kah-Nie vs. Astoria Ford, 5 p.m.; at CMH Field: Ilwaco vs. Astoria Ford, 11:30 a.m.; Tillamook vs. Ilwaco, 2:30 p.m.
THURSDAY Junior Baseball — Knappa/Longview at Astoria Ford, (3 games, times TBA)	

Wirt: Said situation turned his life upside down

Continued from Page A1

Floyd was killed in May after a white police officer held his knee against Floyd’s neck for about eight minutes during an arrest. His death led to protests worldwide, including in Clatsop County. The officer was charged with second-degree murder.

City Manager Linda Engbretson said in an email that the city followed policies and procedures concerning the personnel matter.

“The employee at issue was placed on administrative leave during the pendency of the investigation performed by an independent third party,” she said. “The investigation is complete and none of the allegations were substantiated and as such the city will not be taking any further action and the employee will be returning from administrative leave.”

Wirt told The Astorian that he will return to work with “my head very high because I did nothing wrong.”

“I want to thank the people that did support me from the very beginning and didn’t jump to conclusions,” he said.

Wirt was on “The Lars Larson Show” on Friday afternoon and told the radio

host he had been “completely exonerated.”

“I knew how it would turn out because I knew that these allegations did not happen,” the officer said.

Wirt said he notified his supervising officer about the Facebook post circulating in June. Fearing retaliation and worried for his family’s safety, he said he left town the night after the allegations were made to stay with a friend in Washington state.

Wirt said the situation has turned his life upside down, and has also been financially damaging to his private barbecue venture.

The city hired Renee Starr, a Portland attorney, to conduct the investigation. In an executive summary of her report, released to The Astorian under the state’s public records law, she found that both Wirt and the man who characterized the officer’s behavior at the bar were credible witnesses.

But Starr said she could not find substantial evidence that Wirt more likely than not said the words, “I can’t breathe,” and mocked Floyd’s death.

The man who described the encounter was consistent in his view that he heard the

words, “I can’t breathe,” two or three times, Starr wrote, but he was 14 feet away, it was a loud bar with music playing overhead, and plexiglass panels surrounded the bar, obstructing his view and the sound.

No other witnesses were able to corroborate that Wirt said the words, “I can’t breathe,” Starr found.

Starr said she gave weight to the fact the man volunteered that he has a bias against police and he acknowledged it might give his account less credibility. She concluded that the man held a genuine belief that what he posted on social media about the encounter was accurate, “although he may have rushed to judgment based on his own perceptions.”

Wirt was hired as a reserve by Warrenton police in 1997 and discharged in 2000, according to the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training website. He was hired as a reserve again in 2009 and reclassified as a police officer in 2013. He has served as a K-9 officer.

Mayor Henry Balensifer said the City Commission does not have access to the

investigative report, since it involves a personnel matter, which is confidential.

“What the City Commission has been made aware of is that there is no evidence to sustain the allegations against the employee per an independent investigator and the employee will resume working in the near future,” the mayor said in a statement.

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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
						
69 54	68 58	67 58	68 54	67 56	69 57	73 57
Partly sunny	Low clouds	Some sun	Partly sunny	Variable cloudiness	Partly sunny	Partly sunny

ALMANAC

Astoria through Sunday

Temperatures

High/low	67/57
Normal high/low	67/53
Record high	95 in 1906
Record low	42 in 1950
Precipitation	
Sunday	0.08"
Month to date	0.38"
Normal month to date	0.51"
Year to date	38.37"
Normal year to date	36.67"

Forecasts and graphics provided by
AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight’s Sky: Before midnight, Hercules,the Hero, high above the southern horizon.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	5:38 a.m.
Sunset tonight	9:04 p.m.
Moonrise today	1:28 a.m.
Moonset tonight	3:28 p.m.

New	First	Full	Last
			
July 20	July 27	Aug 3	Aug 11

TODAY’S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
9:18 a.m.	5.0	3:24 a.m.	1.6	
9:10 p.m.	7.1	2:47 p.m.	2.4	
Cape Disappointment				
8:50 a.m.	4.8	2:47 a.m.	1.8	
8:53 p.m.	7.0	2:10 p.m.	2.6	
Hammond				
9:04 a.m.	5.1	3:03 a.m.	1.8	
9:01 p.m.	7.3	2:25 p.m.	2.6	
Warrenton				
9:13 a.m.	5.4	3:08 a.m.	1.7	
9:05 p.m.	7.5	2:31 p.m.	2.5	
Knappa				
9:55 a.m.	5.3	4:25 a.m.	1.4	
9:47 p.m.	7.4	3:48 p.m.	2.1	
Depoe Bay				
8:15 a.m.	4.9	2:19 a.m.	1.9	
8:08 p.m.	7.2	1:31 p.m.	2.8	

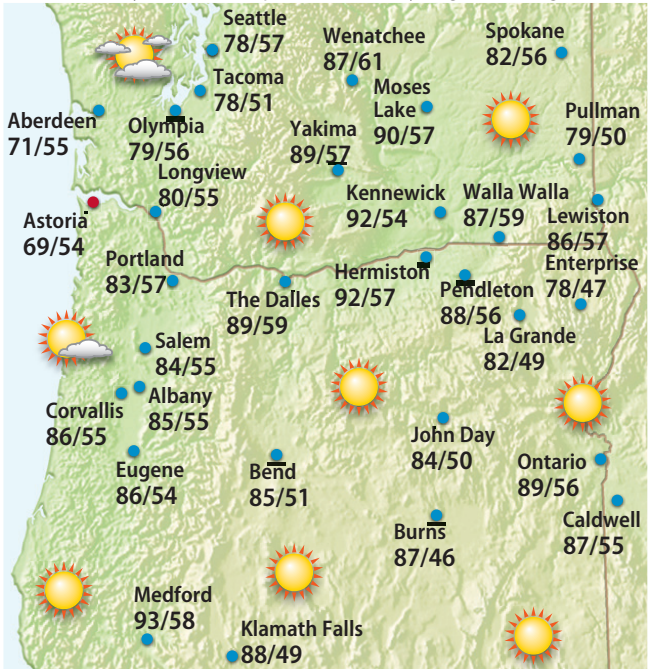
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	93/74/s	94/74/s
Boston	78/63/t	73/64/pc
Chicago	90/72/pc	88/70/t
Dallas	101/78/pc	99/80/s
Denver	83/58/t	86/62/pc
Honolulu	88/75/sh	89/75/c
Houston	98/80/s	98/78/pc
Los Angeles	81/63/pc	81/62/pc
Miami	94/79/pc	94/80/pc
New York City	86/68/s	83/68/s
Phoenix	110/86/pc	110/89/pc
San Francisco	71/55/pc	74/56/pc
Wash., DC	90/71/s	92/74/pc
Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.		

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REGIONAL FORECAST

Shown is today’s weather. Temperatures are today’s highs and tonight’s lows.



City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W	City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	84/44/s	89/49/s	North Bend	69/53/s	69/56/pc
Brookings	77/57/s	80/60/s	Roseburg	88/59/s	92/63/s
Ilwaco	66/56/pc	66/58/c	Seaside	69/55/pc	69/57/c
Newberg	84/54/s	86/57/s	Springfield	86/53/s	89/58/s
Newport	64/49/s	63/51/pc	Vancouver	82/56/pc	84/60/pc