

Trump slams Qatar for funding terror as Tillerson urges calm

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an extraordinary broadside against a key U.S. partner, President Donald Trump lambasted Qatar on Friday for funding terrorism “at a very high level” and insisted that it stop. “No more funding,” the president said.

Trump’s condemnation contradicted the message delivered by his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, who had urged Qatar’s neighbors to ease their blockade while calling for “calm and thoughtful dialogue.” Only an hour later, Tillerson sat in the front row in the Rose Garden as Trump enthusiastically embraced the move by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others to punish Qatar.

“The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level,” Trump said, echoing an allegation the Saudi-led group has used to justify cutting diplomatic ties to the tiny gas-rich kingdom. “We have to stop the funding of terrorism.”

Despite Tillerson’s call for there to be “no further escalation,” Trump’s sharp comments were likely to further embolden Saudi Arabia and the others in their bid to isolate Qatar. The State Department had said the U.S. learned only at the last minute about the Arab nations’ plan to cut ties. But Trump said that he, Tillerson and military leaders had decided during Trump’s trip to Saudi Arabia last month that a public rebuke was needed.

“The time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding — they have to end that funding — and its extremist ideology in terms of funding,” Trump said. Though the president said others, too, were guilty of supporting terrorism, he said he would not name them.

In a day of mixed messages and chaotic diplomacy, Tillerson emphasized the economic, humanitarian and military damage he said the blockade was inflicting. He said



President Donald Trump, accompanied by Romanian President Klaus Werner Iohannis, speaks during a news conference in the Rose Garden at the White House Friday.

families were being separated, children removed from school and Qataris forced to deal with food shortages.

Trump punches back, accuses Comey of lying to Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — Punching back a day after his fired FBI director’s damaging testimony, President Donald Trump on Friday accused James Comey of lying to Congress and said he was “100 percent” willing to testify under oath about their conversations.

Trump cryptically refused to say whether those private exchanges were taped — a matter at the heart of the conflicting accounts of what passed between them at a time when Comey was leading an FBI investigation into Russia’s interference in the presidential election and its ties to the Trump campaign.

He asserted that nothing in Comey’s testimony to the Senate pointed to collusion with Russia or obstruction of justice. “Yesterday showed no collusion, no obstruction,” Trump said.

He further denied ever asking Comey for his “loyalty,” contradicting Comey’s detailed sworn testimony about a private dinner the two men had in the White House.

“No I didn’t say that,” Trump stated abruptly, taking questions at a joint press conference with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis in the Rose Garden. Asked if he would make that denial under oath, he said: “100 percent.”

Trump’s aides have dodged questions about whether conversations relevant to the Russia investigation have been recorded, and so did the president, in series of teases. “Well, I’ll tell you about that maybe

sometime in the very near future,” Trump said. Pressed on the issue, he insisted he wasn’t “hinting anything,” before adding: “Oh you’re going to be very disappointed when you hear the answer, don’t worry.”

May soldiers on as election shock complicates Brexit

LONDON (AP) — In a political drama both brutal and surreal, British Prime Minister Theresa May tried Friday to carry on with the business of governing as usual, while her Conservative Party reeled from losing its parliamentary majority and her opponents demanded she resign.

An election that May called to strengthen her hand as Britain leaves the European Union ended with her political authority obliterated, her days in office likely numbered and the path to Brexit more muddled than ever.

Meanwhile the supposed loser, Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, savored a surprisingly strong result and basked in the adulation of an energized, youthful base.

British newspapers summed it up in a word: Mayhem.

The Conservatives built their election campaign around May’s ostensible strengths as a “strong and stable” leader, and the outcome is a personal slap in the face. But May soldiered on Friday, re-appointing senior ministers to her Cabinet and holding talks with a small Northern Irish party about shoring up her minority government.

“I obviously wanted a different result last night,” a grim-faced May acknowledged, promising she would “reflect on what happened.”

With results in from all 650 House of Commons seats after Thursday’s vote, May’s bruised Conservatives had 318 — short of the 326 they needed for an outright majority and well down from the 330 seats they had before May’s roll of the electoral dice.

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