

In Comey memos, Trump talks of 'hookers,' jailing journalists

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Associated Press



This combination photo shows President Donald Trump speaking during a round-table discussion on tax policy in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., on April 5, left, and former FBI director James Comey speaking during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington in June 2017.

AP Photo/Evan Vucci, left, and Andrew Harnik

WASHINGTON — In a series of startlingly candid conversations, President Donald Trump told former FBI Director James Comey that he had serious concerns about the judgment of a top adviser, asked about the possibility of jailing journalists and described a boast from Vladimir Putin about Russian prostitutes, according to Comey's notes of the talks obtained by The Associated Press on Thursday night.

The 15 pages of documents contain new details about a series of interactions with Trump that Comey found so unnerving that he chose to document them in writing. Those seven encounters in the weeks and months before Comey's May 2017 firing include a Trump Tower discussion about allegations involving Trump and prostitutes in Moscow; a White House dinner at which Comey says Trump asked him for his loyalty; and a private Oval Office discussion where the ex-FBI head says the president asked him to end an investigation into Michael Flynn, the former White House national security adviser.

The documents had been eagerly anticipated since their existence was first revealed last year, especially since Comey's interactions with Trump are a critical part of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into whether the president sought to obstruct justice. Late Thursday night, Trump tweeted that the memos "show clearly that there was NO COLLUSION and NO OBSTRUCTION."

In a Friday morning tweet, Trump lamented that Flynn's life has been "totally destroyed" after he pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the

Russian ambassador, "while Shadey (sic) James Comey can Leak and Lie and make lots of money from a third rate book (that should never have been written)."

He added: "Is that really the way life in America is supposed to work? I don't think so!"

The president also has accused Comey of leaking classified information. The memos obtained by the AP were unclassified, though some portions were blacked out as classified. Details from Comey's memos reported in news stories last year appear to come from the unclassified portions.

In explaining the purpose of creating the memos, which have been provided to Mueller, Comey has said he "knew there might come a day when I would need a record of what had happened" to defend not only himself but the FBI as well.

The memos cover the first three months of the Trump administration, a period of upheaval marked by staff turnover, a cascade of

damaging headlines and revelations of an FBI investigation into potential ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. The documents reflect Trump's uneasiness about that investigation, though not always in ways that Comey seemed to anticipate.

In a February 2017 conversation, for instance, Trump told Comey how Putin told him, "we have some of the most beautiful hookers in the world" even as the president adamantly, and repeatedly, distanced himself from a salacious allegation concerning him and prostitutes in Moscow, according to one memo. Comey says Trump did not say when Putin had made the comment.

In another memo, Comey recounts how Trump at a private White House dinner pointed his fingers at his head and complained that Flynn, his embattled national security adviser, "has serious judgment issues." The president blamed Flynn for failing to alert him promptly to a congratulatory call from a world leader, causing a delay for Trump in

returning a message.

The foreign leader's name is redacted in the documents, but two people familiar with the call tell the AP it was Putin. They were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"I did not comment at any point during this topic and there was no mention or acknowledgment of any FBI interest in or contact with General Flynn," Comey wrote.

By that point, the FBI had already interviewed Flynn about his contacts with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, and the Justice Department had already warned White House officials that they were concerned Flynn was vulnerable to blackmail.

Flynn was fired Feb. 13, 2017, after White House officials said he had misled them about his Russian contacts during the transition period by saying that he had not discussed sanctions. The following day, according to a

For Trump, Giuliani adds toughness, star power to legal team

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida (AP) — For weeks, President Donald Trump had grown increasingly frustrated with the cable news chatter that he couldn't hire a big-name attorney for his legal team.

But the president boasted to a confidant this week that he had struck a deal that he believed would silence those critics: He was hiring "America's F---ing Mayor."

With the addition of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Trump gains a former U.S. attorney, a past presidential candidate and a TV-savvy defender at a time when the

White House is looking for ways to bring the president's involvement with special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation to a close. Trump has been weighing whether to sit for questioning by Mueller's team, and his lawyers have repeatedly met with investigators to define the scope of the questions he would face.

Giuliani will enter those negotiations, filling the void left by attorney John Dowd, who resigned last month.

The deal was finalized over dinner in the last week at Mar-a-Lago, the president's coastal Florida retreat. On Monday, Giuliani was spotted at a West Palm Beach hotel, gleefully puffing on a cigar but declining to talk to the press.

Giuliani's addition to the legal team fulfills his long-delayed hope for a White House job. After drawing wide praise for his leadership in New York after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, Giuliani ran for president seven years later only to see his bid quickly falter.



Giuliani

separate memo, Comey says Trump cleared the Oval Office of other officials, encouraged him to let go of the investigation into Flynn and called him a good guy. Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and is now cooperating with Mueller's investigation.

The memos reveal that days before Flynn's firing, then-White House chief of staff Reince Priebus asked Comey if Flynn's communications were being monitored

under a secret surveillance warrant.

"Do you have a FISA order on Mike Flynn?" Priebus asked Comey, according to the memos, referring to an order under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Comey said he "paused for a few seconds and then said that I would answer here, but that this illustrated the kind of question that had to be asked and answered through established channels."

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