

Trump’s ex-lawyer fires what could be warning shot

Cohen once boasted he would “take a bullet” for Donald Trump

Associated Press

NEW YORK — After once boasting he would “take a bullet” for Donald Trump, the president’s long-time personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen fired a possible warning shot toward the White House, saying he now puts “family and country first.”

In his first interview since federal agents raided his home and hotel room three months ago as part of an investigation into his business dealings, Cohen made clear that protecting Trump is not his priority.

“My wife, my daughter and my son have my first loyalty and always will,” Cohen told ABC’s George Stephanopoulos in an off-camera interview that was reported on Monday’s “Good Morning America.” “I put family and country first.”

Cohen, who hasn’t been charged, wouldn’t say if he would cooperate with prosecutors in the probe. But he also did nothing to dampen such speculation, taking issue with some of Trump’s criticisms of the special counsel’s Russia investigation and even going out of his way to praise the FBI.

“I don’t agree with those who demonize or vilify the FBI,” Cohen was quoted as saying. The raid, he added, “was obviously upsetting to me and my family. Nonetheless, the agents were respectful, courteous and professional.”

Robert Mintz, a former federal prosecutor now in private practice, said that Cohen “has sent every signal he possibly can to prosecutors that he will put his



AP Photo/Seth Wenig, File

President Donald Trump’s longtime personal lawyer Michael Cohen said Sunday that he sat down for an interview with ABC News and his “silence is broken.”

own interests first and will jump at any deal that may save him from going to jail.”

“By putting distance between himself and the president on issues both large and small,” Mintz added, “he’s telegraphing to prosecutors that he intends to be his own man and in the end will do exactly what he thinks is best for himself and his family.”

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders would not comment on whether the president was concerned about the possibility Cohen would strike a deal with prosecutors.

“I’m not going to weigh in to this issue and I refer you to outside counsel,” she said.

The Cohen interview was released on the same day that a former federal judge vetting material seized from him said in a court filing that over a million items were turned over to prosecutors after she determined they weren’t protected by attorney-client privilege.

Cohen was Trump’s self-described fixer and a key player in the Trump Organization for more than a decade, regularly berating reporters and threatening lawsuits against anyone who posed a challenge to his boss.

In a Fox News interview last year, Mr. Cohen declared: “I will do anything to protect Mr. Trump.” He also told Vanity Fair, “I’m the guy who would take a bullet for the president,” adding, “I’d never walk away.”

A day after he tweeted “I will always protect my POTUS” in April, the FBI raided his home, office and hotel room as part of a probe by federal prosecutors in New York into his business dealings.

Among other things, investigators are looking into a \$130,000 payment he handled as part of a confidentiality agreement with porn star Stormy Daniels, who says she had an affair with Trump in 2006. Trump

denies that.

Cohen in the past has said that the payment was made on his own initiative. But in the ABC interview, he said he couldn’t comment on advice of his lawyer.

“I want to answer. One day I will answer,” he said.

Stephanopoulos said he asked Cohen repeatedly if he was considering cooperating with prosecutors in their investigation. Cohen responded that if he is charged with anything, he would defer to his new lawyer in the case, Guy Petrillo, for advice.

Petrillo did not immediately respond to a request for comment. There’s been no indication that he’s been in contact with prosecutors about his client cooperating.

Cohen repeated previous denials that he had any involvement with Russian attempts to interfere with the 2016 presidential election, but he refused to criticize the investigation led by former FBI Director Robert Mueller.

Trump says he has interviewed 4 candidates for Supreme Court

President powered forward with speedy selection process

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump interviewed four prospective Supreme Court justices on Monday and had plans to meet with a few more as his White House aggressively mobilizes to select a replacement for retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Eager to build suspense, Trump wouldn’t divulge who he’s talking to in advance of his big announcement, set for July 9. But he promised that “they are outstanding people. They are really incredible people in so many different ways, academically and in every other way. I had a very, very interesting morning.”

Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump met with four people for 45 minutes each on Monday and will continue meetings through the rest of the week.

Possible nominees being eyed include Thomas Hardiman, who serves alongside Trump’s sister on the Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and Raymond Kethledge, a federal appeals court judge who clerked for Kennedy. Also of interest are Amul Thapar, who serves on the federal appeals court in Cincinnati; Brett Kavanaugh, a former clerk for Kennedy who serves on the federal appeals court in Washington, D.C.; and Amy Coney Barrett, who serves on the federal appeals court in Chicago.

The president spent the weekend at his Bedminster golf club, consulting with advisers, including White House counsel



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in the Oval Office of the White House Monday.

Don McGahn, as he considers his options to fill the vacancy with a justice who has the potential to be part of precedent-shattering court decisions on abortion, health care, gay marriage and other issues.

McGahn will lead the overall selection and confirmation process, the White House said Monday, repeating the role he played in the successful confirmation of Justice Neil Gorsuch last year.

McGahn will be supported by a White House team that includes spokesman Raj Shah, taking a leave from the press office to work full time on “communications, strategy and messaging coordination with Capitol Hill allies.” Justin Clark, director of the Office of Public Liaison, will oversee White House coordination with outside groups.

Trump’s push came as the Senate’s top Democrat tried to rally public opposition to any Supreme Court pick who would oppose abortion rights. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer issued a campaign-season call to action for voters to prevent such a nominee by putting “pressure on the Senate,” which confirms judicial nominees.

Mexico’s victor pledges to ‘reach understanding’ with America

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Fresh off a landslide victory, Mexico’s newly elected leftist president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador pledged Monday to “reach an understanding” with Donald Trump amid uncertain times for two countries that must seek consensus on everything from contentious trade talks to cooperation on security and migration.

During a half-hour telephone conversation, Trump said the two leaders discussed topics including border security, trade and the North American Free Trade Agreement, adding that “I think the relationship will be a very good one.”

In an interview with the Televisa news network, Lopez Obrador did not provide specifics on what an “understanding” with the Trump administration might look like, except to emphasize the need for mutual respect and cooperation between the two neighbors.

“We are conscious of the need to maintain good relations with the United States. We have a border of more than 3,000 kilometers, more than 12 million Mexicans live in the United States. It is our main economic-commercial partner,” he said.

“We are not going to fight. We are always going to seek for there to be an agreement. ... We are going to extend our frank hand to seek a relation of friendship, I repeat, of cooperation with the United States.”

Meanwhile, members of the business and political elite who fiercely opposed Lopez Obrador’s populist candidacy pledged to support his presidency in a loyal opposition, and the largely



AP Photo/Moises Castillo

Presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador delivers his victory speech in Mexico City’s main square, the Zocalo, late Sunday.

orderly vote in which his rivals conceded defeat gracefully — and quickly — was hailed as a win for democracy in the country.

With nearly three-quarters of the ballots counted, Lopez Obrador had about 53 percent of the vote — the most for any presidential candidate since 1982, a time when the Institutional Revolutionary Party was in its 71-year domination of Mexican politics and ruling party victories were a given.

Rivals Ricardo Anaya and Jose Antonio Meade acknowledged Lopez Obrador’s win even before official results were announced, in a break from past elections. Lopez Obrador himself refused to accept his two previous presidential losses, and in 2006 his supporters set up a protest camp that caused months of chaos in downtown Mexico City.

Lopez Obrador, who rode a wave of popular anger over government corruption to become the first self-described leftist elected to the Mexican presidency in four decades, has pointedly sought to reassure his respect for the constitution,

private property and individual rights, vowing there will be no expropriations even as he pushes to “eradicate” endemic corruption.

He announced a team of advisers that includes prominent businessman Alfonso Romo — a friend of telecom magnate Carlos Slim, one of the world’s wealthiest people — and widely respected politician Tatiana Clouthier, formerly a member of Anaya’s conservative party, apparently seeking to signal that nobody should fear his promise of “profound change.”

Business leaders who have openly warred with Lopez Obrador for years vowed to work with him and said fighting graft is an area where they see eye-to-eye.

“We have a lot in common as well as profound differences,” said Gustavo de Hoyos, president of the Mexican Employer’s Confederation, Coparmex. He added the private sector would defend recent initiatives, such as an energy reform bill that opened the sector to private investors under President Enrique Pena Nieto, “that have benefited competitiveness.”

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