

Mueller concludes Russia-Trump probe, delivers report

Special counsel not recommending any further indictments

By ERIC TUCKER, MICHAEL BALSAMO and CHAD DAY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Robert Mueller on Friday turned over his long-awaited final report on the contentious Russia investigation that has cast a dark shadow over Donald Trump’s presidency, entangled Trump’s family and resulted in criminal charges against some of the president’s closest associates.

The comprehensive report, still confidential, marks the end of Mueller’s probe but sets the stage for big public fights to come. The next steps are up to Trump’s attorney general, to Congress and, in all likelihood, federal courts.

The Justice Department said the report was delivered by a security officer on Friday afternoon to the office of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, and then it went to Attorney General William Barr. Word of the delivery triggered reactions across Washington, including Democrats’ demands that it be released publicly before long and Republicans’ contentions that it ended two years of wasted time and money.

Barr released a letter noting his plans to write his own account of Mueller’s findings. The White House released a statement saying it had not seen or been briefed on the special counsel’s document.

What happens next is “up to Attorney General Barr,” said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders.

Barr said he could send his account to Congress quickly.

“I am reviewing the report and anticipate that I may be in a position to advise you of the special counsel’s principal conclusions as soon as this weekend,” Barr said in his letter to the top Republicans and Democrats on the House and Senate Judiciary committees. He pledged a commitment to transparency.

The attorney general said the Justice Department had not denied any request from the special coun-



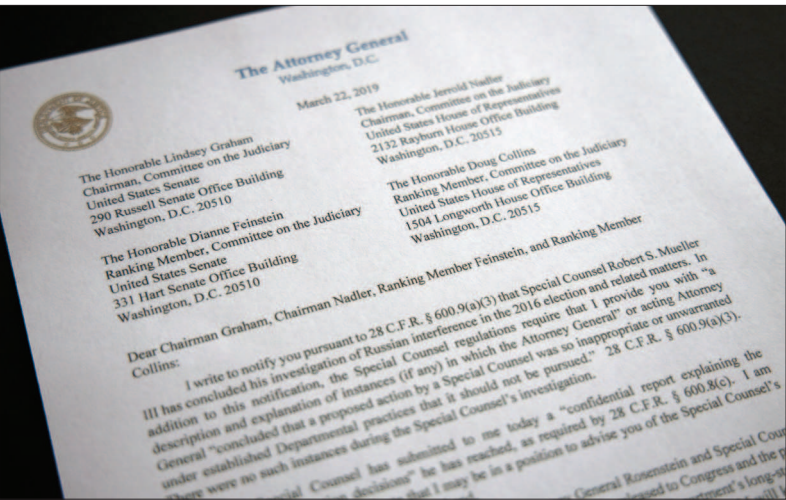
Special Counsel Robert Muller arrives at his office building on Thursday in Washington.

sel, something Barr would have been required to disclose to Congress to ensure there was no political inference in the independent probe.

With no details released at this point, it’s not known whether Mueller’s report answers the core questions of his investigation: Did Trump’s campaign collude with the Kremlin to sway the 2016 presidential election in favor of the celebrity businessman? Also, did Trump take steps later, including by firing his FBI director, to obstruct the probe?

But the delivery of the report does mean the investigation has concluded without any public charges of a criminal conspiracy between the campaign and Russia, or of obstruction by the president. Mueller is not recommending any further indictments in the Russia probe, a Justice Department official confirmed Friday. That person, who described the document as “comprehensive,” was not authorized to discuss the probe and asked for anonymity.

It’s unclear what steps Mueller will take if he uncovered what he believes to be criminal wrongdoing by Trump, in light of Justice Department legal opinions that



A copy of a letter from Attorney General William Barr advising Congress that Special Counsel Robert Mueller has concluded his investigation is shown on Friday in Washington.

have held that sitting presidents may not be indicted.

The mere delivery of a confidential report set off immediate demands from Democrats for full release of Mueller’s findings.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer declared it “imperative” to make the full report public.

The top congressional Demo-

crats said, “The American people have a right to the truth.”

Democrats also expressed concern that Trump would try to get a “sneak preview” of the findings.

“The White House must not be allowed to interfere in decisions about what parts of those findings or evidence are made public,” they said in a joint statement.

Barr has said he wants to make as much public as possible, and

any efforts to withhold details will prompt a tussle between the Justice Department and lawmakers who may subpoena Mueller and his investigators to testify before Congress. Such a move by Democrats would likely be vigorously contested by the Trump administration.

The conclusion of Mueller’s investigation does not remove legal peril for the president. Trump faces a separate Justice Department investigation in New York into hush money payments during the campaign to two women who say they had sex with him years before the election. He’s also been implicated in a potential campaign finance violation by his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who says Trump asked him to arrange the transactions. Federal prosecutors, also in New York, have been investigating foreign contributions made to the president’s inaugural committee.

No matter the findings in Mueller’s report, the investigation has already illuminated Russia’s assault on the American political system, painted the Trump campaign as eager to exploit the release of hacked Democratic emails and exposed lies by Trump aides aimed at covering up their Russia-related contacts. Over the 21-month investigation, Mueller has brought charges against 34 people, including six aides and advisers to the president, and three companies.

The special counsel brought a sweeping indictment accusing Russian military intelligence officers of hacking Democrat Hillary Clinton’s campaign and other Democratic groups during the 2016 election. He charged another group of Russians with carrying out a large-scale social media disinformation campaign against the American political process that also sought to help Trump and hurt Clinton.

Closer to the president, Mueller secured convictions against a campaign chairman who cheated banks and dodged his taxes, a national security adviser who lied about his Russian contacts and a campaign aide who misled the FBI about his knowledge of stolen emails.

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