

TIMELINE OF TRUMP AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE: KEY DATES AND EVENTS

by [Artin Afkhami](#)

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Did President Donald Trump or other U.S. officials engage in an obstruction of justice with respect to the Russia investigation? There are three scenarios which raise that question. It's important to keep each of them in mind as one thinks about incriminating and exculpatory information, and patterns of related behavior.

Before setting out each scenario and then the Timeline, it may bear reminding that under [U.S. federal criminal law](#), the definition of obstruction of justice includes anyone who “corruptly ... or by any threatening letter or communication ... endeavors to influence, obstruct, or impede” a criminal investigation. According to the U.S. Attorney’s [Manual](#), even a mere attempt to pursue those ends is enough for obstruction, regardless of whether the attempt succeeds. The criminal standard matters if prosecutors were ever to consider pressing charges while Trump is President (a period in which he may be immune from indictment) or after he leaves office. The federal definition could also serve as a background for impeachment proceedings, although Congress would not be tied to the strict definitions of existing criminal law. Finally, there is always the court of public opinion.

What are the three scenarios that prosecutors, members of Congress, and the public could consider under the heading of obstruction of justice?

- **First, any attempts to unlawfully have FBI Director James Comey drop the investigations of Michael Flynn**
- **Second, any attempts to unlawfully interfere with FBI or congressional investigations into collusion between the Trump campaign and Russian officials during the 2016 election**
- **Third, any attempts to unlawfully interfere with the FBI or congressional investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 election (having nothing to do with any alleged Trump campaign**

collusion)

It is also important to keep in mind that one form of obstruction may be in getting officials to drop an investigation (which is very difficult to ever pick back up) and another form may be in firing officials with authority over the investigation.

The following is a Timeline of events that could be relevant to considerations of the obstruction of justice. It adheres as much as possible to the most directly relevant information, but also includes some other evidence that may be relevant to investigators who are looking for patterns of behavior (for example, Trump's treatment of Preet Bharara).

Late July 2016 – According to the *New York Times* and later confirmed by former FBI Director James Comey, the FBI [begins](#) investigating the Russian government's attempts to interfere with the 2016 U.S. election. The investigation includes examining whether Donald Trump's presidential campaign was connected to those efforts.

Dec. 29, 2016 – In retaliation for Russian interference in the election, the Obama administration [orders](#) the expulsion of Russian intelligence agents and imposes new sanctions on Russian state agencies and individuals suspected of hacking U.S. computer systems. The CIA and FBI had previously concluded that Russia had interfered in the election multiple times including leaking damaging information to assist the Trump campaign.

Jan. 6, 2017 – According to Senate [testimony](#) by James Comey, he first [meets](#) Trump at Trump Tower on this date as part of an Intelligence Community assessment briefing on Russian election interference. After the meeting ends, Comey meets with Trump privately and assures Trump he is not being personally investigated. He writes a memo about the meeting after he returns to his car. Later testifying to Congress Comey says, "I was honestly concerned that he might lie about the nature of our meeting, and so I thought it really important to document."

Jan. 6, 2017 – The *New York Times* [reports](#) that the IC concluded in its assessment that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a campaign to influence the outcome of the 2016 election, initially seeking to weaken

Hillary Clinton, but later developing a “clear preference” for Trump. The *Times* reports that at the IC assessment meeting earlier that morning, Trump “responded by acknowledging, for the first time, that Russia had sought to hack into the Democratic National Committee’s computer systems,” but asserted that these activities did not influence the election’s outcome, and he did not address the IC conclusion that Putin had favored his campaign.

Jan. 19, 2017 – *The New York Times* first [reports](#) that U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies are conducting a counterintelligence investigation into links between Russian officials and Trump associates. The investigation centers partly on past business dealings between Trump advisers and Russia. The FBI is leading the investigation, alongside the CIA, NSA, and the Treasury Department’s financial crimes unit. The associates under investigation include former campaign manager Paul Manafort and advisers Carter Page and Roger Stone.

Jan. 24, 2017 – In a scheduled interview with FBI, National Security Adviser Michael Flynn [lies](#) in saying that he did not discuss U.S. sanctions for election interference during a phone call with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

NBC News [reports](#) that the office of Deputy FBI Dir. Andrew McCabe called Flynn’s scheduler on morning of Jan. 24, and said that the FBI wished to speak with Flynn that same day, without disclosing the reason for the interview. Two FBI agents then reportedly visited Flynn’s White House office and interviewed Flynn, who reportedly did not have an NSC lawyer or a personal lawyer present. And though an NBC source said that White House officials would normally alert a National Security Council lawyer under those circumstances, Flynn’s office did not do so.

A senior White House official who was present at the time told NBC, that “No one knew that any of this was happening,” while another senior official said, “Apparently it was not clear to Flynn that this was about his personal conduct...So he didn’t think of bringing his own lawyer.”

NBC also reports that Flynn concealed knowledge of the interview from President Trump and other White House officials, with two NBC sources saying that Trump was unaware that Flynn had spoken with the FBI until two days after the interview took place (the day when Acting Acting

Attorney General Yates informed the White House Counsel about Flynn's interview).

Jan. 26, 2017 — NBC News [reports](#) that Acting Attorney General Sally Yates meets White House Counsel Donald McGahn and warns him that Flynn lied about his conversation with Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak to Vice President Mike Pence and other Trump administration officials, and thus Flynn is vulnerable to blackmail. According to CNN, McGahn is reportedly the first senior official to learn about Flynn's FBI interview. (If that reporting is accurate it would mean Flynn did not inform senior officials after his FBI interview.)

NBC reports that McGahn then briefs President Trump, senior advisor Stephen Bannon, and then White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, about his meeting with Yates and Flynn's FBI interview. While NBC reports that this happens on the same day, Trump's lawyer John Dowd told the [Washington Post](#) only that it occurred sometime before the end of January, and the [Post](#) [reported](#) subsequently that McGahn must have told Trump by Jan. 30.

One NBC source said that, after learning of the FBI interview from Yates, McGahn did not follow up with Flynn to ask whether he lied to the FBI. The source added that McGahn did not "conclude" that Flynn had lied to the FBI until after Flynn's firing. The source added that it was not clear whether Flynn intentionally deceived the FBI, and thus lied, or if it was an unintentional discrepancy. According to the source, McGahn and other White House officials concluded that Flynn lied to the FBI only in late winter or early spring 2017, after the FBI made a request to the White House for phone records and other documents related to Flynn.

Note: There is reason to doubt the accuracy of this aspect of the NBC report, with legal observers noting that sources saying Trump did not know about the interview until after it occurred, McGahn not concluding Flynn lied to the FBI until after Flynn was fired, and other pieces in the report seem almost perfectly designed to negate the elements of obstruction of justice:

This is such tightrope walking White House spin—everyone learns about/suspects wrongdoing only at the precise moment it becomes of smaller legal consequence—that it should be treated with a whole lot of skepticism. <https://t.co/UREoqEOuf1>

— Susan Hennessey (@Susan_Hennessey) [January 24, 2018](#)

Who knows, maybe Trump didn't learn about interview until later, then didn't suspect Flynn lied until just after Comey's fired. But gosh, that peculiar mix of ignorance, gullibility, and coincidence works out nicely if you want to refute corrupt mental state on particular days.

— Susan Hennessey (@Susan_Hennessey) [January 24, 2018](#)

The NBC report is also inconsistent with other reporting. Trump's personal lawyer, John Dowd told the *Washington Post* [on the record](#) in Dec. 2017 that President Trump knew that Flynn had probably given the FBI the same inaccurate account about his conversation with Kislyak that he did to Mike Pence. Dowd said Trump received that information from McGahn, and was aware of McGahn's account when he asked former FBI Director James Comey to let the Flynn investigation go on Feb. 14, 2017. Other news reports are consistent with what Dowd told the *Washington Post*, including [CNN](#) reporting that McGahn "believed then-national security adviser Michael Flynn had misled the FBI and lied to Vice President Mike Pence and should be fired."

Jan. 27, 2017 – According to Comey's [testimony](#), Trump invites Comey to what he believes will be a group dinner at the White House, but which turns out to be a private dinner meeting with the then-FBI Director. Trump asks whether Comey wants to remain FBI Director, and Comey responds affirmatively. During the dinner, Trump repeatedly tells Comey that he "needs loyalty," and Comey responds, "You will always get honesty from me." Trump responds, "That's what I want, honest loyalty." Comey responds, "You will get that from me," hoping to end the conversation. Comey later [testifies](#) to Congress that, given the one-on-one nature of the meeting and the substance of their talk, Comey believed the dinner was in part an effort to create a "patronage relationship."

Feb. 13, 2017 – National Security Advisor Michael Flynn [resigns](#) after revelations that he misled Vice President Mike Pence and other administration officials about a conversation with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in December 2017 about U.S. sanctions against Russia.

Feb. 14, 2017 – According to Comey's Senate [testimony](#), Comey and other IC leaders deliver a counter-terrorism briefing at the Oval Office. Trump

signals the end of the briefing by thanking everyone and saying he wanted to meet with Comey privately. Trump tells Comey, “I want to talk about Mike Flynn,” adding that Flynn had not done anything wrong, but had to resign because he misled Pence. Trump then tells Comey, “I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go.” Comey later [testifies](#) that he “had understood the President to be requesting that we drop any investigation of Flynn in connection with false statements about his conversations with the Russian ambassador in December.”

Immediately after the meeting, Comey prepared a memo of the communication and presented the issue to FBI senior leadership. Comey interpreted Trump’s communication as “[a direction](#)” to drop the FBI investigation as it related to Flynn’s alleged false statements about his meetings with the Russian Ambassador in December 2016.

The FBI leadership team and Comey believed that it was important not to “infect the investigative team with Trump’s request,” and decided to refuse the directive. The team concluded it would not have made sense to disclose Trump’s request to Sessions, who had recused himself from the Russia investigation, or the Deputy AG, who was soon to be replaced. They believed it was best to keep the communication “closely held,” although they might decide to disclose it to other officials as the investigation progressed.

Shortly thereafter, Comey also met with Sessions and told him “that what had just happened – him being asked to leave while the FBI Director, who reports to the AG, remained behind – was inappropriate and should never happen.” He said he “implored” Sessions to ensure that no further private communications occur between Trump and himself. Nevertheless, he did not disclose the content of Trump’s request regarding dropping the Flynn investigation.

In his written [statement](#) for the Senate, Comey said the Attorney General “did not reply” and then told Senators in open session that Sessions was “just kind of looking at me” and “his body language gave me a sense like, ‘What am I going to do?’”

In his own testimony before the Senate, Sessions said Comey’s account was “incorrect” and said, “I did affirm the long-standing written policies of the Department of Justice concerning communications with the White

House.”

Spring 2017 – The *Washington Post* [reports](#) that Trump approached AG Sessions and asked whether the DOJ could possibly drop its case against Trump ally and former Maricopa County, Ariz. Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Sessions advised him that it would be inappropriate to drop the case, after which Trump decided to let the case go to trial and grant Arpaio a pardon if he was convicted. Legal experts believe that Trump’s handling of the Arpaio case may serve as evidence of a pattern of behavior reflecting Trump’s intent to obstruct investigations of himself and his allies, particularly considering his comments to Comey about the FBI’s Michael Flynn investigation (“I hope you can let this go”).

Early March 2017 – President Trump orders White House Counsel Donald McGahn to launch a lobbying campaign to convince Attorney General Jeff Sessions not to recuse himself from the Russia investigation. The *New York Times* [reports](#), “Unaware that Mr. Sessions had already decided to step aside from the inquiry, Democrats began calling for Mr. Sessions to recuse himself — and Mr. Trump told Mr. McGahn to begin a lobbying campaign to stop him.”

When Sessions refuses and tells McGahn that Justice Department officials had said he should recuse, McGahn understands and accepts his decision.

Upon learning that McGahn failed to persuade Sessions, Trump erupts in anger in front of White House officials, emphasizing that he needs his Attorney General to protect him as he believed Eric Holder had protected President Obama and Robert F. Kennedy had protected his brother. Trump then [asks](#): “Where is my Roy Cohn?,” referring to his former personal lawyer who died in 1986, and who had served as Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s chief counsel during the McCarthy hearings.

Mar. 2, 2017 – Sessions [announces](#) that he is recusing himself from any investigations into charges that Russia meddled in the 2016 election. Acting Deputy AG Dana Boente takes over the Russia investigation following Sessions’ recusal.

Mar. 9, 2017 – Trump’s assistant [calls](#) U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Preet Bharara’s office and leaves a message asking Bharara to call Trump back. Trump’s direct communication request

violates protocols governing presidential contact with federal prosecutors. Bharara notifies an adviser to AG Sessions of the presidential contact, and tells him he will not respond because of the protocol violation. Bharara then calls Trump's assistant to say that he cannot speak with the president directly because of the protocol violation.

Mar. 10, 2017 – Trump orders Bharara and 46 other U.S. Attorneys appointed by Barack Obama to resign. The request surprises Bharara's office because in November, he had met with Trump and advisers including Steve Bannon and Jared Kushner at Trump Tower, and Trump had personally asked him to stay in the position. Bharara publicly refuses to resign.

Mar. 11, 2017 – Acting Deputy AG Dana Boente calls Bharara and tells him that he is one of the 46 U.S. Attorneys being asked to resign. Bharara tells him that he is interpreting that as being fired, and Boente repeats that he is being asked to resign.

Bharara tweets that afternoon that he has just been fired by Trump:

Because Bharara served as U.S. attorney of the S.D.N.Y., his jurisdiction included Trump Tower, and he would likely have known whether Trump Tower had been wiretapped by federal investigators as Trump claimed, as well as other Tower-related information potentially relevant to the Russia investigation, or to any other investigations involving the finances or other activities of Trump and his companies.

Mar. 20, 2017 – In [testimony](#) before the House Intelligence Committee, Comey [confirms](#) that the FBI and Justice Department are investigating whether members of the Trump campaign colluded with Russian efforts to influence the 2016 election. He also dismisses Trump's claims that President Obama wiretapped him during the presidential campaign. Comey's testimony reveals the Russia investigation publicly for the first time.

Trump erupts in anger again after learning of Comey's testimony, according a *New York Times* [report](#). He was reportedly particularly upset at Comey's refusal to answer questions at the hearing about whether Trump was personally under investigation, even though Comey had told Trump otherwise privately.

After the Mar. 20, 2017 hearing — Trump begins openly speaking with White House officials about his desire to fire Comey, which leads one McGahn deputy, Uttam Dhillon, to mislead the President about whether he has the authority to fire Comey, according to the [New York Times](#). Dhillon initially tells Trump that he would only be able to fire Comey for cause, such as for poor job performance or corruption. Dhillon was concerned that if Trump were to fire Comey, it would endanger his Presidency, because the FBI would then be forced to open an obstruction of justice investigation focused on Trump.

Dhillon then asks a junior Justice Department lawyer to research whether the President could remove the FBI Director without cause. And when the junior lawyer concludes that the FBI Director can be fired without cause, like any other executive branch employee, Dhillon does not correct his earlier advice and withholds that information from Trump.

Mar. 22, 2017 – The [Washington Post reports](#) that Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and other senior officials participate in an Oval Office briefing, after which Trump asks Coats and CIA Director Mike Pompeo to stay for a private meeting. Trump complains to them about Comey’s handling of the Russia investigation and asks them to intervene with Comey to get the FBI to [stop investigating Flynn](#).

After the meeting, Coats discusses Trump’s request with other officials and decides that against Trump’s requests to issue a public statement and to intervene with Comey regarding Flynn, believing both would be inappropriate.

A day or two after Mar. 22, 2017 – After the Mar. 22 meeting, Trump [reportedly](#) makes separate telephone calls to both Coats and NSA Director Adm. Michael Rogers and requests that they issue public statements denying the existence of any evidence of collusion between Trump officials and the Russian government. Both officials view the requests as inappropriate and refuse.

Then Deputy Director of the NSA Richard Ledgett writes an internal NSA memo documenting Trump’s conversation with Rogers. During the call, Trump questions the accuracy of the IC Assessment that Russia had interfered with the election, in addition to trying to convince Rogers to issue a public statement.

In addition to Trump's requests, senior White House officials separately requested that top intelligence officials consider the possibility of intervening with Comey directly to have the FBI withdraw its probe of Flynn. Their lines of questioning included: "Can we ask him to shut down the investigation? Are you able to assist in this matter?"

Mar. 30, 2017 – According to Comey's Senate [testimony](#), on this date, Trump calls Comey at his office and tells Comey that the Russia investigation is a "cloud" inhibiting his ability to act as President. Trump assures Comey that he has had nothing to do with Russia and asks Comey what he can do to "lift the cloud." Comey responds that the FBI is investigating the matter as quickly as it can, and that a full investigation is in Trump's best interests.

Trump then asks about why Comey had confirmed the FBI investigation into coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign at a Congressional hearing, and Comey explains that he was responding to Congressional leaders' demands. Comey explains that he has briefed those leaders on who exactly the FBI is investigating and informed them that Trump is not personally under investigation. Trump repeatedly urges Comey to get the fact that he himself is not under investigation out to the public.

Comey later testifies to the Senate that the FBI and DOJ were reluctant to make a public statement that they did not have an open case on Trump "for a number of reasons, most importantly because it would create a duty to correct, should that change."

Mar. 30, 2017 – The *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that Mike Flynn has informed the FBI and congressional officials of his willingness to be interviewed by House and Senate investigators as part of the investigation into Trump campaign ties to Russia, in exchange for immunity from prosecution. Flynn's lawyer released a [statement](#) confirming only that discussions with Congressional investigators were taking place, though it concluded: "no reasonable person, who has the benefit of advice from counsel, would submit to questioning in such a highly politicized, witch-hunt environment without assurances against unfair prosecution." The *New York Times* [reports](#) that congressional officials are unwilling to make a deal with Flynn until they are further along in their inquiries and have a better idea of the information Flynn

might offer.

Mar. 31, 2017 – Trump applauds Flynn’s request for immunity, tweeting:

Apr. 11, 2017 – According to Comey’s [testimony](#), Trump calls Comey again and asks what he has done about Trump’s request to publicize the fact that he is not personally under investigation. Comey tells Trump that he relayed Trump’s request to Acting Deputy AG Dana Boente but that he has not heard back. Trump reiterates that the “cloud” is interfering with his ability to act as President, and asks whether he should have his staff contact Boente. Comey advises Trump of the traditional channel, which is for White House Counsel to contact DOJ leadership to make such requests. Trump says he will do so and tells Comey, “Because I have been very loyal to you, very loyal; we had that thing you know.” Comey responds by reiterating that the proper channel for Trump’s request is for Trump to follow the DOJ chain of command. Trump agrees and ends the call.

Comey testifies that in light of Trump’s requests, “Our — our absolute primary concern was, we can’t infect the investigative team. We don’t want the agents and analysts working on this to know the president of the United States has — has asked — and when it comes from the president, I took it as a direction — to get rid of this investigation, because we’re not going to follow that — that request.”

According to the [New York Times](#), former Chief of Staff Reince Priebus has provided handwritten notes to Special Counsel Mueller showing the president spoke to Priebus about how he had called Comey urging the FBI Director to announce publicly that he was not under investigation.

Apr. 25, 2017 – Rod Rosenstein is [confirmed](#) as Deputy AG by the Senate and will serve as the official overseeing the Russia investigation in light of Sessions’ recusal. Rosenstein told Senators he would handle it “the way I would handle any investigation,” adding: “I don’t know the details of what, if any, investigation is ongoing, but I can certainly assure you if it’s America against Russia, or America against any other country, I think everyone in this room knows which side I’m on.”

May 8, 2017 – According to the *New York Times*, Trump [summons](#) VP Pence, his chief of staff, top lawyers, and other senior advisors to the Oval Office and informs them that he plans to get rid of Comey, showing

them an at least [four-page](#) letter, single-spaced consisting of a long-running series of thoughts on why Comey should be fired that Trump dictated to aide Stephen Miller. The draft criticizes Comey for failing to publicly disclose that Trump was not personally under investigation and for his handling of both the Russia and Clinton email investigations.

White House Counsel Donald McGahn opposes the letter as “problematic” in multiple ways. His objections include the letter’s angry tone and its references to private conversations between Trump and Comey. He successfully convinces Trump not to use the draft. Deputy AG Rod Rosenstein then composes his own letter, which becomes a central part of the administration’s public rationale for the removal. The *New York Times* [reports](#) that “Mr. Sessions had been charged with coming up with reasons to fire him,” according to administration officials.

May 3, 2017 – Comey [testifies](#) before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the FBI’s investigation into Hillary’s Clinton use of a private email server. At the hearing, Comey refuses to answer questions about whether Trump is under investigation.

As White House aides report this information to Trump, he chastises Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia probe, questions Sessions’ loyalty, and repeats his earlier complaint about needing his AG to protect him, [according](#) to the *New York Times*. Reportedly, Comey’s testimony on this day is the final straw that defeats Trump aides’ efforts to stop him from firing Comey.

May 5, 2017 – Following a meeting at the Justice Department, DAG Rosenstein pulls aside one of White House Counsel McGahn’s aides and tells him that top Justice Department and White House lawyers need to discuss Comey’s future, according to a *New York Times* [report](#).

Later that day, an aide to Attorney General Jeff Sessions reportedly approaches a congressional staff member about whether he has any damaging information on FBI Director James Comey, apparently trying to undermine Comey’s legitimacy. Sessions’ goal is to place one negative item about James Comey per day in the news media. When the *New York Times* [reports](#) on this meeting, Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores denies that the meeting occurred telling the *Times*: “This did not happen and would not happen...Plain and simple.”

May 6-7, 2017 – Trump spends the weekend watching video recordings of Comey’s testimony and discussing possibilities for removing Comey with senior aides Jared Kushner and Stephen Miller while at his Trump National Golf Club in New Jersey. It is here that Trump reportedly decides that he will remove Comey, and asks Miller to draft a letter for Trump to send to Comey.

White House sources interviewed by the *New York Times* deny that the draft Miller comes up with refers to either Russia or the FBI investigation. But two *Times* sources who read the draft say it begins by labeling the Russia investigation “fabricated and politically motivated.”

May 8, 2017 – Trump reportedly meets with Sessions and Rosenstein to discuss firing Comey, and Rosenstein agrees to write his own memo justifying Comey’s removal. Before writing the memo, Rosenstein obtains a copy of Miller’s draft letter.

That same day, Trump implicitly accuses former Acting Attorney General Sally Yates of leaking classified information in a tweet. Because Yates was scheduled to testify on the Flynn investigation before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee later in May, and because she had previously warned the White House that Flynn might have been compromised, this tweet could provide supporting evidence for an attempt to intimidate a witness in the Flynn investigation.

May 9, 2017 – Trump fires Comey from his post as FBI Director, removing the nation’s top law enforcement official while he was leading a criminal investigation into potential collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government to influence the 2016 election as well as an investigation into former NSA Adviser Michael Flynn for potentially making a false statement to the FBI. The firing raised questions about political interference in an ongoing criminal investigation that could implicate Trump and his top advisers.

In the official announcement, Trump cites letters written by AG Sessions and DAG Rosenstein that “recommend [Comey’s] dismissal,” adding that he has accepted their recommendation and therefore is terminating Comey. The letters largely deal with the Clinton email investigation, and Trump also publicly cites Comey’s handling of the Clinton investigation in announcing the change. However, Trump’s letter also references the Russia investigation and Comey’s actions toward Trump personally:

“While I greatly appreciate you informing me, on three separate occasions, that I am not under investigation, I nevertheless concur with the judgment of the Department of Justice that you are not able to effectively lead the Bureau.”

Of the two letters Trump cites, Sessions’ brief letter does recommend Comey’s dismissal, and cites the reasoning in Rosenstein’s letter. Rosenstein’s letter, however, does not explicitly recommend dismissal; instead, it only outlines Comey’s “serious mistakes” in handling the Clinton e-mail investigation. It concludes that the FBI will be unlikely to regain public trust until a new Director is put in place. White House officials say that Sessions and Rosenstein pushed for Comey’s removal, but observers in Washington, including veteran former FBI agents, view the letters as pretextual.

May 9, 2017 – ABC News reports that Rosenstein was so upset that he was on the verge of resigning because of Trump’s public statements, and statements by White House officials, that Trump was acting on Rosenstein’s recommendation in firing Comey. Rosenstein tells the Sinclair Broadcast Group: “No, I’m not quitting.”

May 9, 2017 – Late that night, the White House announces that Trump will meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov in the Oval Office the next day.

Shortly after May 9, 2017 – Trump invites new Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe to the White House for a meeting, according to the Washington Post. The two men briefly exchange pleasantries and then Trump asks McCabe: Whom did you vote for in the 2016 election? McCabe reportedly responds that he did not vote in the general election.

Later in the conversation, Trump expresses his anger at McCabe over the fact that his wife, Jill, received \$675,288 from two political groups affiliated with then-Va. governor and Clinton ally Terry McAuliffe as part of her Democratic campaign for a Virginia state senate seat in 2015. Trump would later complain to White House aides that he believed McCabe himself was a Democrat.

CNN correspondent Ryan Nobles tweeted that public Virginia voting records show that McCabe voted in the 2016 Republican primary election, but not the general election, corroborating McCabe’s account:

May 10, 2017 – Trump [meets](#) with Lavrov and Ambassador Kislyak in the Oval Office and speaks to them about the Russia investigation and Comey’s firing. He reportedly tells the senior Russian officials: “I just fired the head of the F.B.I. He was crazy, a real nut job...I faced great pressure because of Russia. That’s taken off...I’m not under investigation.”

According to the *Times*, Press Secretary Sean Spicer did not dispute the account. Instead, he claimed in a statement that: “By grandstanding and politicizing the investigation into Russia’s actions, James Comey created unnecessary pressure on our ability to engage and negotiate with Russia. Spicer adds, “The investigation would have always continued, and obviously, the termination of Comey would not have ended it. Once again, the real story is that our national security has been undermined by the leaking of private and highly classified conversations.”

May 11, 2017 – In an [interview](#) with NBC News’s Lester Holt, Trump admits that even before he consulted Rosenstein, “I was going to fire Comey. There’s no good time to do it, by the way.” Holt mentions that in Trump’s letter outlining the reasons for Comey’s firing, he cited Rosenstein’s letter, and Trump responds, “Oh, I was going to fire regardless of recommendation.”

Then, while addressing how he would have fired Comey regardless, he adds: “And in fact when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said you know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story, it’s an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won...This was an excuse for having lost an election.”

When Holt asks him about whether he was angry with Comey because of the FBI’s Russia investigation, Trump responds that he never tried to pressure Comey to drop it. He adds: “Maybe I’ll expand that, you know, lengthen the time (of the Russia probe) because... it should be over with, it should... in my opinion, should have been over with a long time ago, because all it is, is an excuse, but I said to myself, I might even lengthen out the investigation, but I have to do the right thing for the American people. He’s the wrong man for that position.” He added, “I want that to be so strong and so good. And I want it to happen.”

May 12, 2017 – Trump [tweets](#), “James Comey better hope that there are no “tapes” of our conversations,” suggesting Trump may have recorded such tapes, and may decide to release them. The tweet follows *a New*

***York Times* [report](#) the day prior describing the dinner between Trump and Comey at which Trump asked Comey for a pledge of loyalty.**

The *Times* [reports](#) that both the president and his spokesman refused to confirm or deny whether Trump tapes his conversations with visitors. When asked about whether such tapes existed by a Fox News host later that day, Trump reiterated: “That I can’t talk about. I won’t talk about it... All I want is for Comey to be honest.” Spokesman Sean Spicer, when asked, would not give a definitive response, saying only, “The president has nothing further to add on that.” Spicer further denied that Trump was threatening Comey, saying “That’s not a threat...He simply stated a fact. The tweet speaks for itself. I’m moving on.”

May 16, 2017 – Trump [reportedly](#) erupts in anger at AG Sessions again after the *New York Times* [reports](#) on a memo written by James Comey memorializing a Feb. 14, 2017 conversation with Trump, in which Trump had asked Comey to drop the FBI investigation into Flynn.

May 17, 2017 – Rosenstein [appoints](#) former FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III to serve as the DOJ’s Special Counsel to investigate Russian interference in the election and possible coordination between Trump campaign associates and the Russian government. Trump responds publicly by saying, “A thorough investigation will confirm what we already know — there was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity. I look forward to this matter concluding quickly. In the meantime, I will never stop fighting for the people and the issues that matter most to the future of our country.”

Upon hearing the news, Trump privately [berates](#) Sessions in an Oval Office meeting and tells him he should resign. Trump accuses Sessions of “disloyalty” over his [recusal](#) and then launches into a series of insults against Sessions. Sessions becomes emotional and tells Trump he will quit. The *Times* reports that Sessions would later tell colleagues that Trump’s dressing down was the most humiliating experience he had ever had in public life.

May 18, 2017 – AG Sessions [reportedly](#) drafts and then sends a resignation letter to the White House. Trump rejects the letter, returning it with a handwritten note at the top: “Not accepted.” Senior administration officials argue to Trump that accepting Sessions’ resignation would only create more problems for him. Trump would

reportedly tell aides that he wanted to remove Sessions again in July 2017, though that time, Trump did not act.

That same day, Trump decries the decision to appoint Mueller on Twitter:

May 18, 2017 – Rosenstein testifies before a closed-door Senate briefing that he knew Trump wanted to fire Comey before he wrote his letter justifying Comey’s removal. Rosenstein adds that Trump asked him to write the letter. He tells Senators that on May 8 he knew that Trump was planning to fire Comey.

June or July 2017 – The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Mueller’s office interviewed DAG Rosenstein in June or July 2017 about Trump’s removal of Comey. A source told CNN that Rosenstein has no current plans to recuse himself from the investigation, suggesting he does not view himself as a key witness in the obstruction of justice investigation. DOJ Spokesperson Ian Prior released a statement saying, “As the deputy attorney general has said numerous times, if there comes a time when he needs to recuse, he will. However, nothing has changed.”

June 6, 2017 – *Washington Post* reporter Robert Costa reports on NBC News that “The President is expected to be Tweeting on Thursday in response to Comey — not to stay quiet during the testimony — because he himself wants to be the one driving the process.”

Costa later tweets:

Summer 2017 – President Trump repeatedly urges Senate Republican leaders to end the Senate Intelligence Committee’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. Intel Committee Chairman Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) told the *New York Times*: “It was something along the lines of, ‘I hope you can conclude this as quickly as possible.’” Burr said he responded that “when we have exhausted everybody we need to talk to, we will finish.” Trump also asked Majority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Intelligence Committee member Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) to quickly end the investigation.

The *Times* reported:

Mr. Trump’s requests of lawmakers to end the Senate investigation came during a period in the summer when the

president was particularly consumed with Russia and openly raging at his own attorney general, Jeff Sessions, for recusing himself from any inquiries into Russian meddling in the election. Mr. Trump often vented to his own aides and even declared his innocence to virtual strangers he came across on his New Jersey golf course.

In this same period, the president complained frequently to Mr. McConnell about not doing enough to bring the investigation to an end, a Republican official close to the leader said.

Nevertheless, Sen. Burr told the *Times* he did not feel pressured by Trump's appeals, and Sen. Blunt likewise said that he was not bothered by them. Burr described Trump's requests as a product of his lack of government experience.

June 7, 2017 – DNI Coats and NSA Director Rogers both refuse to [testify](#) about their personal interactions with Trump and whether Trump asked them to intervene in the Russia investigation at a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing.

Coats tells the Committee, "I don't believe it's appropriate for me to address that in a public session," when asked about whether Trump requested he intervene in the Russia investigation. Coats adds, however: "But I am more than willing to sit before this committee during its investigative process in a closed session and answer your questions." Roger says, "I am not going to discuss the specifics of interactions that I may or may have not had with the President."

Both men deny being pressured to intervene. Coats says, "I have never felt pressure to intervene or interfere in any way and shape — with shaping intelligence, in a political way or in relationship to an ongoing investigation." Rogers tells the Committee, "To the best of my recollection, I have never been directed to do anything I believe to be illegal, immoral, unethical or inappropriate."

June 8, 2017 – Trump's personal lawyer Marc Kasowitz [responds](#) to Comey's testimony claiming Comey "admitted that he unilaterally and surreptitiously made unauthorized disclosures to the press of privileged communications with the President."

However, legal experts [say](#) that the executive privilege could not have been implicated by Comey's memos, because executive privilege functions as a shield against compelled rather than voluntary disclosure, and in any case, the leaks did not [disclose](#) any classified information or break any laws, since they dealt solely with private interactions with the President (the kind of internal communications of which many insider books are written).

June 16, 2017 – Trump attacks Deputy AG Rosenstein on Twitter:

June 22, 2017 – The *New York Times* [reports](#) that Trump officially announces that he does not have taped recordings of his conversations with James Comey, citing Trump's tweet:

The *Times* report notes that Trump's tweet leaves open the possibility that others may have recorded their conversations, potentially without permission, such as the Intelligence Community generally or FBI in particular.

The *Times* report notes that legal experts have said Trump's initial tweet threatening that tapes existed could serve as part of a potential obstruction of justice case, because the tweet could be construed as pressuring Comey not to reveal details about his and Trump's conversations relating to the Russia investigation to federal investigators. Others say the threat of existence of tapes suggest Trump was trying to keep Comey honest.

June 16, 2017 – Trump attacks Rosenstein and the expanding Russia probe in a series of tweets:

June 23, 2017 – In a Fox television [interview](#), in response to a Fox interviewer suggesting that the possibility of recordings of Comey's conversations with Trump may have ensured Comey's honesty in his Senate testimony, Trump says: "Well, it wasn't very stupid, I can tell you that." He added that in response to the possibility of Comey's conversations being recorded, "I think his story may have changed."

July 8, 2017 – The *New York Times* [reports](#) that Donald Trump Jr. arranged a meeting at Trump Tower with a Kremlin-linked Russian lawyer in June 2016, shortly after his father won the Republican nomination.

Campaign manager Paul Manafort and Jared Kushner also attended. Though Trump Jr. initially releases a statement saying the meeting was primarily about an adoption program, [emails](#) released later show meeting occurred because Trump Jr. was [promised](#) damaging information about Hillary Clinton by the Russian lawyer.

Trump personally [dictates](#) a statement for Trump Jr., stating that he and the Russian lawyer “primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children,” and that the subject of the meeting was “not a campaign issue at the time.” These claims are later proven to be false. Before the revelation of the president’s involvement in these deliberations, Trump’s lawyer repeatedly [denied](#) Trump was involved in drafting them. Eventually, the White House [confirms](#) that Trump “[weighed in](#)” on the drafting of the misleading statement.

July 10, 2017 – Trump tweets that Comey illegally leaked classified information to the media:

July 19, 2017 – In an [interview](#) with the *New York Times*, Trump says that had he known Sessions was going to recuse himself from the Russia investigation, he would not have nominated him to be Attorney General:

TRUMP: Look, Sessions gets the job. Right after he gets the job, he recuses himself.

BAKER: Was that a mistake?

TRUMP: Well, Sessions should have never recused himself, and if he was going to recuse himself, he should have told me before he took the job, and I would have picked somebody else.

Trump repeats that he relied on the Rosenstein letter in deciding to fire Comey:

TRUMP: [...] Rosenstein becomes extremely angry because of Comey’s Wednesday press conference, where he said that he would do the same thing he did a year ago with Hillary Clinton, and Rosenstein became extremely angry at that because, as a prosecutor, he knows that Comey did the wrong thing. Totally wrong thing. And he gives me a letter, O.K., he gives me a letter about Comey. And by the way, that was a tough letter, O.K. Now,

perhaps I would have fired Comey anyway, and it certainly didn't hurt to have the letter, O.K.

Trump asserts again that Comey leaked confidential information in his Senate testimony, and oddly suggests that, in their initial meeting, Comey told Trump to “treat Flynn good” (when Comey testified that Trump had asked him to let go of the Flynn investigation):

TRUMP: Comey also says that he did something in order to get the special prose— special counsel. He leaked. The reason he leaked. So, he illegally leaked.

...

TRUMP: So think of this. [NYT reporter] Mike [L. Schmidt]. He illegally leaks, and everyone thinks it is illegal, and by the way, it looks like it's classified and all that stuff. So he got — not a smart guy — he got tricked into that, because they didn't even ask him that question. They asked him another question, O.K.?

TRUMP: He said I said “hope” — “I hope you can treat Flynn good” or something like that. I didn't say anything.

Later in the interview, Trump contends that Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe has a conflict of interest involving Hillary Clinton. Days later, he repeats his claim on Twitter:

Jill McCabe, McCabe's wife, received nearly \$500,000 in 2015 campaign donations from a political action committee associated with Va. Gov. Terry McAuliffe during an unsuccessful Virginia Senate run. McAuliffe is close with both Bill and Hillary Clinton.

July 24, 2017 – The *New York Times* [reports](#) that Trump aide and son-in-law Jared Kushner meet with Senate investigators looking into the Russia investigation on the Senate Intelligence Committee. After meeting with investigators behind closed doors, Kushner released a statement to news media: “All of my actions were proper and occurred in the normal course of events of a very unique campaign...I did not collude with Russians, nor do I know of anyone in the campaign who did.” He is the first member of the Trump inner circle to confer with congressional

investigators.

July 24–25, 2017 — In a series of early morning tweets, Trump [renews](#) his attacks against Sessions.

He also repeated his claims regarding McCabe having a conflict of interest with respect to the Clintons:

Aug. 1, 2017 – In an [interview](#) with the *Wall Street Journal*, Trump again berates Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia investigation:

WSJ: He's the Russian guy. So Sessions has recused himself, but is Bob Mueller's job safe? There is speculation –

TRUMP: No, we're going to see. I mean, I have no comment yet, because it's too early. But we'll see. We're going to see. Here's the good news: I was never involved with Russia. There was nobody in the campaign. I've got 200 people that will say that they've never seen anybody on the campaign. Here's another – he was involved early. There's nobody on the campaign that saw anybody from Russia. We had nothing to do with Russia. They lost an election and they came up with this as an excuse. And the only ones that are laughing are the Democrats and the Russians. They're the only ones that are laughing. And if Jeff Sessions didn't recuse himself, we wouldn't even be talking about this subject.

And Trump further suggests that Sessions' early campaign endorsement was not a sign of loyalty:

WSJ: Just on Sessions, just one thing. Would you like to see him step aside? Would you like to see him resign? Would it be in the country's best interest just –

TRUMP: I'm just very disappointed in him. I'm disappointed in, you know, a number of categories. I told you, the leakers. He should have – he should be after them. So many people say to me: Why are they going after you on nothing and they leave Hillary Clinton alone on, you know, really major things? And it is – so I'm disappointed in him. And don't forget, when they say he endorsed me, I went to Alabama. I had 40,000 people, you may have been

there, remember, in Mobile?

WSJ: I remember.

TRUMP: I had 40,000 people. He was the senator from Alabama. I won the state by a lot, massive numbers. A lot of the states I won by massive numbers. But he was a senator. He looks at 40,000 people and he probably says, what do I have to lose, and he endorsed me. So it's not like a great, loyal thing about the endorsement. But I'm very disappointed in Jeff Sessions.

Aug. 3, 2017 – Vox [reports](#) that, in late May, acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe told several people in high-level FBI management that they should consider themselves potential witnesses in any potential obstruction of justice investigation involving Trump. He told colleagues that he could also be a potential witness himself.

Aug. 31, 2017 – The *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that Trump's lawyers have met with Mueller several times in recent months and have submitted several memos to him contending that Trump didn't obstruct justice by firing Comey and questioning Comey's reliability as a potential witness.

Aug. 2017 and Thereafter – Axios [reports](#) that, at the public urging of President Trump, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has been [strongly urging](#) FBI Director Christopher Wray to replace his leadership team, particularly deputy director Andrew McCabe and former general counsel James Baker. Sessions began putting pressure on Wray after the FBI Director's confirmation in Aug. 2017 and it has reportedly intensified over time. President Trump and other senior Republicans had been calling for McCabe's removal over claims of political bias. Axios also [reports](#) that Wray threatened to resign if McCabe were removed. The White House was reportedly concerned about the media backlash that would result if Wray resigned. Axios reports that Sessions discussed Wray's upset over the pressure to fire McCabe with White House Counsel McGahn, who advised him that the issue was not worth losing the FBI Director over. McGahn did not speak with Wray directly about this issue.

Fall 2017 – *Foreign Policy* [reports](#) that the White House turned over records to Special Counsel Mueller in the fall that indicated that White House counsel Don McGahn researched federal statutes regarding lying to investigators and violations of the Logan Act during the first days of

the Trump presidency. The records indicate that McGahn was concerned that then-National Security Adviser Michael Flynn may have violated one or both of those laws. They also indicate that McGahn warned Trump of Flynn's potential violations, suggesting Trump might have known about Flynn lying to the FBI from the beginning of his presidency.

Oct. 19, 2017 – [CNN](#) and [Politico](#) report that Trump has been personally interviewing candidates for high-profile U.S. Attorney positions with jurisdictions over the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York (including Manhattan and Brooklyn respectively). The candidates Trump is interviewing have ties to the law firms representing close Trump allies. They include Geoffrey Berman, employed by the firm where Rudy Giuliani is a partner, for the S.D.N.Y. position, and Ed McNally, a partner at the law firm founded by Trump personal attorney Marc Kasowitz, for the E.D.N.Y. position. Both outlets report Trump had previously interviewed Jessie Liu, Trump's nominee for the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington, D.C., who was confirmed by the Senate.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Con.) tells CNN, "What's most alarming about the President interviewing these particular candidates for US attorney positions is that these chief federal prosecutors are going to decide whether to indict Trump campaign advisers or staff if there's collusion between the Trump campaign and Russians proven and possibly consider criminal charges against the President himself." Similarly, he tells *Politico*, "For him to be interviewing candidates for that prosecutor who may in turn consider whether to bring indictments involving him and his administration seems to smack of political interference." Blumenthal says he has discussed "potentially blocking any nominees who have been interviewed by the President" with other Senators.

Preet Bharara, the former U.S. Attorney in Manhattan, tells CNN's Wolf Blitzer: "I understand that he's personally interviewed the potential applicants for U.S. attorney in Manhattan and Brooklyn and one in Washington, D.C. — which happen to be places where Donald Trump has property and assets and companies — and not interviewed personally US attorneys for other positions...I think that reasonably raises a number of questions."

Presidents rarely personally interview candidates for the 93 U.S. Attorney jobs, and former President Barack Obama never interviewed a single such candidate during his Presidency, according to MSNBC legal analyst

and former Justice Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Oct. 27, 2017 – The *Washington Post* [reports](#) that U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia Dana Boente resigns. Boente was also serving as Acting Assistant Attorney General of the National Security Division. He plans to remain in the U.S. Attorney post until a successor is named, and in the National Security position until Trump nominee John C. Demers is confirmed.

Former Justice Department spokesman Matthew Miller [tells](#) the Rachel Maddow Show that, as recently as two days prior to his resignation, Boente told a friend that he looked forward to returning to serving full-time as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia again after John C. Demers's confirmation.

Oct. 28, 2017 – CNN [reports](#) that a federal grand jury approves the first criminal charges in Mueller's investigation. The charges were placed under seal by orders of a federal judge, and it is unclear what the charges were, although sources told CNN that the person charged could be taken into custody as soon as Monday, Oct. 30.

Oct. 30, 2017 – The *New York Times* [reports](#) that Mueller announces criminal charges against former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and business associate Rick Gates. Both men plead not guilty to the charges, which center on tax evasion and money laundering, and turn themselves into the FBI. Mueller also announces the unsealing of a plea agreement with former Trump foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos, who it is revealed has been under arrest since July 27 and has been cooperating with the Mueller investigation since. Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI regarding his contacts with Russian officials while working for the Trump campaign.

Oct. 30-31, 2017 – On Twitter, Trump dismisses the charges against Manafort and calls for the FBI to focus on Hillary Clinton and the Democrats. The next day, in another series of tweets, he minimizes George Papadopoulos' role in his campaign, calling him a young, low-level volunteer.

Norm Eisen writes in a [USA Today op-ed](#), “[I]t is very unusual for the president of the United States to attack a witness who is cooperating with the United States an ongoing federal investigation.” Trump may be

trying to intimidate Papadopoulos by issuing such public criticisms, which could deter Papadopoulos' cooperation. That would leave Trump liable to witness intimidation and obstruction of justice charges.

Dec. 2, 2017 – President Trump tweets that he fired former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn because Flynn lied to the FBI and to VP Mike Pence. This suggests that Trump knew that Flynn lied to the FBI when he asked Comey to drop the Flynn investigation the day after Flynn's firing on Feb. 14, 2017. Trump's request could thus be construed as having impeded an FBI investigation, and thereby obstructing justice.

Within hours after Trump's first tweet, [news](#) reports emerged that acting Attorney General Sally Yates had informed White House counsel Don McGahn that Flynn told the FBI the same thing he told VP Mike Pence, and that McGahn had passed that information to the President. In their Jan. 26 conversation, Yates told McGahn that Flynn misled Pence on the nature of his contacts with Sergey Kislyak.

The next day, Trump's personal lawyer, John Dowd, [confirmed](#) to the *Washington Post* that Trump knew in January that Flynn gave the FBI the same inaccurate information that he told Pence. Dowd said that McGahn passed that information onto Trump, on the basis of Yates' warning.

Dowd also took responsibility for writing the problematic tweet. According to the *NBC News* [report](#) Dowd said he first drafted the tweet, then sent it to White House Social Media Director Dan Scavino to publish. After NBC asked Dowd for a copy of the original email he sent to Scavino, Dowd told them that he dictated it orally. The *Washington Post* had first [reported](#) that Dowd took responsibility for the tweet.

Dowd also confirmed to NBC that the tweet referred to Yates' statement to McGahn on Jan. 26 that Flynn had "given the [FBI] agents the same story he gave the Vice President." He added that Yates did not accuse Flynn of lying: "For some reason, the Department [of Justice] didn't want to make an accusation of lying...The agents thought Flynn was confused." Dowd said that McGahn passed the information in Yates' statement on to the president, but that "All the president knew was that the department was not accusing him of lying."

***CBS News* [reported](#) the next Monday that Yates did not directly tell McGahn that Flynn lied or that he was under investigation, although there**

were implications of both in their conversation. Yates testified before the Senate that what Flynn said about his interactions with Kislyak was untrue, leaving open the possibility that he could have misremembered the facts or accidentally said the untrue statements.

Dec. 3, 2017 – Trump tweets a denial that he asked Comey to drop the Flynn investigation, and attacks the integrity of the FBI investigation:

Dec. 4, 2017 – Trump’s personal lawyer, John Dowd, claims the “President cannot obstruct justice because he is the chief law enforcement officer under [the Constitution’s Article II] and has every right to express his view of any case,” in an interview with [Axios](#).

Dec. 12, 2017 – President Trump tweets that the Trump-Russia investigation has wasted “thousands of hours” and spent “many millions of dollars:”

Dec. 21, 2017 – FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe [testifies](#) in a closed session before the House Intelligence Committee that former FBI Director Comey recounted conversations he had with President Trump to him soon after those conversations happened. This testimony suggests McCabe could corroborate Comey’s accounts. McCabe came under intense scrutiny from Republicans during his congressional hearings and in the days prior, with several Republican Senators, including Sen. Judiciary Committee Chair [Chuck Grassley \(R-Iowa\)](#), [calling for his removal](#).

Dec. 21, 2017 – The *Washington Post* [reports](#) that FBI General Counsel James Baker is being reassigned to other duties within the bureau by Director Christopher Wray. Baker had emailed colleagues on this day to inform them that his duties were being changed at the FBI. The President tweets:

Observers noted that McCabe, Baker, and FBI Chief of Staff Jim Rybicki [were identified](#) as three sources that could corroborate Comey’s claims back in June 2017, and that all three have been criticized by Republicans since:

Senior FBI officials with whom Comey reportedly discussed Trump’s obstruction efforts at the time include Andy McCabe, Jim Baker, and Jim Rybicki. All are now targets of GOP smear campaigns. Draw your own conclusions.

— Susan Hennessey (@Susan_Hennessey) [December 22, 2017](#)

Two days prior, House Judiciary Committee chair Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) and House Oversight Committee chair Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) [wrote a letter](#) to AG Jeff Sessions and DAG Rosenstein calling for McCabe and Rybicki to testify in closed session before their joint review of the FBI's handling of the Clinton investigation.

Dec. 23, 2017 – The *Washington Post* [reports](#) that Andrew McCabe plans to retire early in 2018 when he becomes eligible for pension benefits. Former FBI Director James Comey laments Republican attacks on McCabe:

Meanwhile, the President tweets:

Dec. 24, 2017 – President Trump renews his attacks on McCabe's wife, referring to Va. Governor Terry McAuliffe as "M (Clinton Puppet)" giving "all this money" to her campaign:

Dec. 26, 2017 – Trump accuses the FBI of using a "pile of garbage" dossier as the basis for its Russia investigation, in response to a *Washington Times* [report](#) (Readers should note: the *Washington Times* defines itself as a conservative news outlet, and generally has a conservative ideological lens) that was discussed on "Fox & Friends:"

See *Just Security* contributor and former CIA clandestine service officer John Sipher's analysis of the Steele dossier [here](#).

Late 2017 – NBC News [reports](#) that White House Counsel Donald McGahn has met with Special Counsel Mueller's team for two days of interviews.

Jan. 24, 2018 – President Trump tells reporters that he is looking forward to testifying under oath in response to questions from Special Counsel Mueller's investigation, according to the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), and others.

Trump told reporters at the White House: "I would love to do it, and I would like to do it as soon as possible...I would do it under oath, absolutely."

He added: "I'm looking forward to it, actually...Here's the story, just so you understand...There's been no collusion whatsoever. There's been no

obstruction whatsoever, and I'm looking forward to it.”

Trump also criticized the suggestion that he might have obstructed justice and says what he did is fight back: “Oh, well, ‘Did he fight back?’... You fight back, ‘Oh, it’s obstruction.’”

Later that same day, the White House lawyer Ty Cobb states that the President was speaking hurriedly and meant to say only that he was willing to meet with the Special Counsel’s team.

[*Editor’s Note:* For more analysis, readers may be interested in: [“A Round-Up of Just Security’s Obstruction of Justice Coverage.”](#)]

Readers may also find of interest an article on whether President Trump specifically obstructed justice in the FBI investigation of Flynn’s dealings with Turkey: [“Turkey on Valentine’s Day: Did Trump Obstruct Investigation of Flynn as a Foreign Agent?”](#)]

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[Artin Afkhami](#)

Associate Editor at Just Security (2017-2018). You can follow him on Twitter ([@artinafkhami](#)).

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