

Attorney General Sees No Case for Obstruction as Mueller Finds No Collusion With Russia

It's no longer only President Donald Trump and his allies saying "no collusion." Special counsel Robert Mueller has reached the same conclusion that the Trump campaign did not conspire with Moscow to gain advantage in the 2016 election.

Mueller also did not uncover actionable evidence in his 22-month probe that Trump sought to obstruct justice by impeding the probe, Attorney General William Barr said Sunday.

However, the special counsel didn't make a determination on whether Trump obstructed justice. Barr said that he and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein determined there was no obstruction case.

But Trump claimed "complete and total exoneration" on both fronts, and said the investigation was the result of an "illegal takedown that failed."

Departing Sunday afternoon from Florida to return to Washington, Trump spoke for the first time since Mueller delivered the report Friday, noting that many people were "so badly hurt" in the course of the probe.

"It was just announced there was no collusion with Russia, [which was] the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. There was no collusion with Russia," Trump told reporters. "There was no obstruction, none whatsoever. It was a complete and total exoneration."

The president added:

It's a shame that our country had to go through this. To be honest, it's a shame that your president has had to go through this. Before I even got elected it began, and it began illegally. And, hopefully, somebody is going to look at the other side. This was an illegal takedown that failed. And hopefully, somebody is going to be looking at the other side. It was complete exoneration. No collusion, no obstruction.

Barr, in a [letter](#) to members of Congress, said Sunday that Mueller found no evidence linking the Trump campaign to Russian election meddling after his investigative team of 19 lawyers and 40 FBI agents conducted 500 interviews, issued 2,800 subpoenas, and executed 500 search warrants.

“The special counsel’s investigation did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its effort to influence the 2016 presidential election,” Barr said in the four-page letter summarizing the Mueller report.

The attorney general’s letter quotes the Mueller report as saying: “[T]he investigation did not establish that members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities.”

Trump had been uncharacteristically silent on Twitter all weekend. Before he made his public comments, however, he tweeted: “No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION. KEEP AMERICA GREAT!”

*No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION.
KEEP AMERICA GREAT!*

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [March 24, 2019](#)

But House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler, D-N.Y., made it

clear he isn't finished.

In light of the very concerning discrepancies and final decision making at the Justice Department following the Special Counsel report, where Mueller did not exonerate the President, we will be calling Attorney General Barr in to testify before [@HouseJudiciary](#) in the near future.

– (((Rep. Nadler))) (@RepJerryNadler) [March 24, 2019](#)

At least some details from the special counsel's report likely will come out, and Democrats insist the entire matter isn't over.

Mueller's team investigated potential obstruction of justice regarding Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey in May 2017 and other matters.

Mueller "ultimately decided not to make a traditional prosecutorial judgment" on obstruction, Barr said in his letter.

"The special counsel did not draw a conclusion one way or another as to whether the examined conduct constituted obstruction," the attorney general said.

On the question of obstruction, Barr quotes the Mueller report as saying that "while this report does not conclude that the president committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him."

He also quotes the report as saying "the evidence does not establish the president in an underlying crime related to Russian election interference."

Barr added: "Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and I have concluded that the evidence developed during the special counsel's investigation is not sufficient to establish the president committed obstruction of justice."

Rosenstein appointed Mueller, a former FBI director, in May 2017 because then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions had recused himself from overseeing the FBI's initial probe.

In his letter, Barr said his "goal and intent" is to release as much of the report as possible, "consistent with applicable law."

Barr said in the letter to the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Judiciary committees that his review of the Mueller report continues.

"It is obvious that special counsel Robert Mueller conducted a thorough and sifting investigation, which comes as no surprise to anyone who knows him or is familiar with his reputation," Heritage Foundation legal scholar John Malcolm said Sunday evening in an email to The Daily Signal. "He has concluded that although the Russians did attempt to interfere with the 2016 election (and likely several others), nobody connected with the Trump campaign was complicit in this activity."

"As to obstruction of justice, Mueller laid out all the facts—most of which were public acts and comments that have already been dissected and analyzed—both pro and con on this issue," said Malcolm, director of Heritage's Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, adding:

Attorney General Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein have analyzed that evidence and concluded, quite reasonably, that a provable case of obstruction of justice does not exist. This is not surprising given that the vast majority of people who engage in obstruction of justice do so because they are, in fact, guilty of the matter which is being investigated—which is not the case here. While the Democrats will, no doubt, continue to investigate these matters, they will not uncover anything that special counsel Mueller has not uncovered and thoroughly analyzed.

Republicans and Democrats want to see as much of the special counsel report on Russian election interference made public as possible—but for different reasons.

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said earlier Sunday that he favors seeing the report made available with classified information redacted.

“I want to see all of it. What was the underlying criminal predicate for the entire investigation?” Rubio said on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” referring to the shadowy beginnings of the FBI probe of a newly elected president, Donald Trump.

Rubio said he is interested in seeing that more than just Mueller’s report to Barr becomes public.

“Let’s see the FISA applications, because this was an extraordinary use of government surveillance power, and we have legal reasons why you might be able to use it, but show us why those were,” Rubio said.

“What was the underlying predicate for those FISA applications,” the Florida Republican asked, referring to the FBI’s requests for warrants to surveil Trump associates under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. “Let’s see all of that. Let’s put all of that out there as well, so we can pass judgment about how the investigation was conducted during the Obama years.”

Rubio and other Republicans hope to expose the partisan motives behind the initial investigation of possible Trump campaign ties to Moscow.

A House Intelligence Committee memo released last year indicated that the probe might have begun as a result of an opposition research document against Trump, known as the Steele dossier, which then was used as the basis for the FBI’s spying on former Trump campaign aide Carter Page during the waning days of the Obama administration.

The Steele dossier, named for former British spy Christopher Steele, who compiled it, was financed by Democrat Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and by the Democratic National Committee.

The contents of the Mueller report remained unknown Sunday to all but Barr and a few other Justice Department officials, but it reportedly does not call for any more indictments in the investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign.

However, Nadler said earlier Sunday that Congress must have the full report to conduct oversight.

"America needs answers as to what's been going on. I hope the Justice Department will not leave things hanging by seeking to keep things secret," Nadler said on "Meet the Press," adding:

I also know the Department of Justice believes it cannot under any circumstances indict a sitting president for anything. That means they cannot hold a sitting president accountable. And accordingly, the only institution that can is Congress, and Congress must get all of the information that is available. ... If we can't do that, then the president is above the law.

Mueller's 675-day probe officially ended Friday, when the special counsel [delivered his report](#) to Barr at the Justice Department. Barr, who took office last month, had indicated Friday evening that he might be able to brief some members of Congress on the report Sunday.

Nadler said Democrat-controlled House committees would do additional investigations of the Trump administration, but that seeing most of the Mueller report would minimize duplicated effort.

"We need to see all the evidence and we shouldn't have to waste our time and the public's time and money recreating the

same information by interviewing all the same witnesses. There is no need for that duplication at all," Nadler said.

Doubling down with a congressional probe of matters Mueller already has investigated appears to be Democrats' way of responding to a report that apparently didn't turn out the way they wanted, said Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga., ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee.

"They think that they can go into the Judiciary Committee and any other committee with a limited budget, limited subpoena power, or limited staff and go up against an investigation that lasted 22 months, had unlimited subpoena power, had plenty of investigators, and they think they can find something more than they did," Collins said on "Fox News Sunday."

"I think they are sadly mistaken, and I think the American people will see through that," he said.

Under Justice Department guidelines designed to protect those who are not charged, the entire report cannot be made public without the attorney general's consent, consistent with other criminal investigations, said Hans von Spakovsky, a former Justice Department lawyer.

"Barr has made it clear that he is going to do exactly what the regulations say he is supposed to do," von Spakovsky, now a senior legal fellow at The Heritage Foundation, said Saturday on Fox News Channel.

"What everyone needs to keep in mind is this is a confidential report," von Spakovsky said. "That's true of all reports that prosecutors make in all criminal investigations. What the regulations say is [Barr] can release parts of the report or all of it if it's in the public interest."

House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., among the bigger partisan bomb throwers during the course of Mueller's

investigation, sounded more measured Sunday.

"I never said I thought the president committed the crime of conspiracy," Schiff said before Barr released his letter.

"We are all determined that this report cannot be buried, that no strategy of briefing a select number of members will avoid the need for transparency here," he said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Schiff later added: "The briefing I think we're going to get this weekend is only going to be very topline conclusions."

Schiff said Friday that he would expect Mueller to testify before Congress. Nadler, however, said he does not want to call any witnesses before the Judiciary Committee unless it's necessary.

The lack of additional indictments and no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russians, based on congressional probes, are indicators of what the report will conclude, predicted Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, ranking member of the House Oversight and Reform Committee.

"To date, there has been not one bit of evidence to show any type of coordination, collusion, and conspiracy between the Trump campaign and Russia to influence the election," Jordan said Sunday morning on "Face the Nation."

Jordan noted that the investigation goes further back than the Mueller probe.

"When this thing all started, back in May 2017, the Justice Department had already been looking into this issue. They started in 2016, late summer 2016," he said.

Referring to congressional testimony by Comey and former FBI lawyer Lisa Page, Jordan said:

All the way up until the special counsel was named in May of

2017, there was no evidence of collusion at that point either. Because when we deposed Lisa Page, when we deposed Jim Comey, they both told us, up until the point Comey left the FBI, there was no evidence of collusion.

Now, 22 months later, there still doesn't appear to be any evidence of any type of coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia to impact the election. We'll read the report and see what it says, but that seems to be the facts as we know them.

Ken McIntyre contributed to this report.

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