

Washington's political warfare intensifies following Mueller report

By Patrick Martin
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The political warfare in Washington intensified Monday following the submission of the report by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 US elections and possible collusion by the Trump campaign.

According to Attorney General William Barr, in a letter to Congress Sunday, Mueller cleared the Trump campaign of the charge of collusion while not making any decision on whether Trump should be charged with obstruction of justice for seeking to impede the investigation.

While Trump and congressional Republicans hailed the Mueller report as a complete vindication of the president and his campaign, congressional Democrats made it clear there would be no letup either in the anti-Russia campaign or investigations into Trump's business and personal affairs.

House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff, who has repeatedly declared there is overwhelming evidence that Trump is acting as a stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin, has scheduled a series of hearings this week on alleged Russian connections. Speaking Sunday on the ABC News program "This Week," he disputed claims that the Mueller report had disproven his charges against Trump, saying, "There's a difference between compelling evidence of collusion and whether the special counsel concludes that he can prove beyond a reasonable doubt the criminal charge of conspiracy."

On Wednesday, Schiff's committee is to interview Felix Sater, a longtime Trump associate, over Trump's efforts in 2016 to negotiate a deal for a Trump Tower in Moscow. On Thursday, the committee will hear testimony on alleged efforts by Russian oligarchs and the Russian government to influence the 2016 election campaign in the United States.

Representative Eric Swalwell of California, another Democrat on the intelligence panel, told CNN Monday

evening, "We want to make sure that no US official, up to the level of the president, has worked on behalf of a foreign intelligence service. We know there was an intent there to receive help from Russia."

Trump fired back, telling the press Monday afternoon at the White House that his opponents have done "very evil things... treasonous things to our country," and urging an investigation into the genesis of the Mueller investigation itself. The day before, he told reporters, "This was an illegal takedown that failed, and hopefully somebody is going to be looking at their other side."

Trump's personal lawyer, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, said on Fox News Monday morning, referring to the investigations by House and Senate committees and by Mueller: "Now the question is if there were three investigations—no evidence of collusion—who made it up? It didn't just come out of thin air. I want to know who did it. Who paid for it? Who fueled it?"

In response to these demands, Senator Lindsey Graham, a close Trump ally and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, announced Monday a probe into how the FBI initially opened in the summer of 2016 its investigation of alleged Russian meddling in the US elections, and the role of other intelligence agencies, mainly the CIA, in that decision.

The next stage in the political crisis will likely revolve around Democratic demands that the Justice Department release the full text of Mueller's report, rather than the four-page letter from Barr summarizing Mueller's decision not to initiate any further prosecutions.

On Monday evening, the Democratic chairmen of six House committees sent a joint letter to Barr demanding that he transmit to them the full text of Mueller's report by next Tuesday, April 2, giving him one week to redact any classified or sensitive material. The six chairmen included Schiff and Jerrold Nadler, head of the Judiciary

Committee, which would initiate any impeachment proceedings against Trump.

Congressional Democrats have focused in particular on a quote from the Mueller report, contained in Barr's letter of March 24, which declares, "While this report does not conclude that the president committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him." This highly unusual assertion has been seized on by the Democrats to suggest Mueller's report may provide enough evidence of obstruction of justice to invalidate Barr's decision not to prosecute.

While Democrats initially claimed a "rush to judgment," suggesting that Barr had taken less than 48 hours to review Mueller's report before deciding against the charge of obstruction of justice, CNN reported Monday that Mueller had actually notified Barr and Rosenstein three weeks ago that he would not make a recommendation on the obstruction charge.

Nadler said he would file a court challenge against any decision by Barr to withhold the text of the Mueller report from Congress. Other Democrats are demanding even more sweeping disclosure: the handing over of the entire investigative file generated by the Mueller probe, which included interviews with more than 500 witnesses, the execution of nearly 3,000 subpoenas, and document production running to hundreds of thousands of pages.

Whatever the immediate effect of such demands, congressional Democrats are stepping up their investigations into Trump's financial and personal affairs, aided by allies in the military-intelligence apparatus and the Justice Department itself. As the *Washington Post* put it, "The investigations into Trump's acts both as a candidate and as president will now move into a more freewheeling phase, as multiple congressional committees and federal prosecutors' offices look into a vast constellation of alleged misdeeds, including Russian efforts to interfere with the US election, Trump's finances, his inaugural committee's fundraising, his family foundation, his business operations after he assumed office and his alleged marital infidelities and payoffs related to them."

In a remarkable editorial Saturday, the *New York Times* declared, "Mr. Trump is sure to be under investigation for the rest of his term in office, and probably in court for the rest of his life."

The *Times* followed up this warning with a further editorial Monday that sought to sustain the campaign against alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election even while admitting—in what amounts to the repudiation

of its two-year campaign to spread FBI and CIA disinformation—that "Mueller and his team were unable to establish that anyone connected to the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government..."

The editorial went on to repeat the threadbare claims that the Russian government hacked Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Clinton campaign computer servers, while not acknowledging the content of what was revealed: the systematic effort by the DNC to favor Clinton over Bernie Sanders, and the prostration of Clinton before her Wall Street paymasters, as revealed in speeches to audiences of top bankers and investors.

Mueller's report has completely discredited the anti-Russia campaign mounted by the Democrats and a large section of the military-intelligence apparatus, with the fulsome support of the *Times*, the *Post*, CNN, MSNBC and the bulk of the corporate-controlled media. This campaign was not about defending "American democracy." It was about using McCarthy-style slanders about Russian subversion to push a definite foreign policy agenda, focused on more aggressive US intervention in Syria, in Ukraine and Eastern Europe generally, and in Central Asia.

The Democratic Party has made no appeal to popular opposition to the Trump administration's ultra-right program of tax cuts and deregulation for corporate America, cuts in social programs, a massive military build-up, and persecution of immigrants. This is because the Democratic Party generally supports these policies and would, were it in office, continue them largely unchanged.

No genuine struggle against the Trump administration can take place through the Democratic Party. What is urgently needed is the mobilization of the working class independently of both big business parties in a political movement based on a socialist program.

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