investigation for obstruction of justice. The sequence of those events raises an inference that after seeking to terminate the Special Counsel, the President sought to exclude his and his campaign’s conduct from the investigation’s scope. The President raised the matter with Lewandowski again on July 19, 2017, just days after emails and information about the June 9, 2016 meeting between Russians and senior campaign officials had been publicly disclosed, generating substantial media coverage and investigative interest.

The manner in which the President acted provides additional evidence of his intent. Rather than rely on official channels, the President met with Lewandowski alone in the Oval Office. The President selected a loyal “devotee” outside the White House to deliver the message, supporting an inference that he was working outside White House channels, including McGahn, who had previously resisted contacting the Department of Justice about the Special Counsel. The President also did not contact the Acting Attorney General, who had just testified publicly that there was no cause to remove the Special Counsel. Instead, the President tried to use Sessions to restrict and redirect the Special Counsel’s investigation when Sessions was recused and could not properly take any action on it.

The July 19, 2017 events provide further evidence of the President’s intent. The President followed up with Lewandowski in a separate one-on-one meeting one month after he first dictated the message for Sessions, demonstrating he still sought to pursue the request. And just hours after Lewandowski assured the President that the message would soon be delivered to Sessions, the President gave an unplanned interview to the New York Times in which he publicly attacked Sessions and raised questions about his job security. Four days later, on July 22, 2017, the President directed Priebus to obtain Sessions’s resignation. That evidence could raise an inference that the President wanted Sessions to realize that his job might be on the line as he evaluated whether to comply with the President’s direction that Sessions publicly announce that, notwithstanding his recusal, he was going to confine the Special Counsel’s investigation to future election interference.

G. The President’s Efforts to Prevent Disclosure of Emails About the June 9, 2016 Meeting Between Russians and Senior Campaign Officials

Overview

By June 2017, the President became aware of emails setting up the June 9, 2016 meeting between senior campaign officials and Russians who offered derogatory information on Hillary Clinton as “part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump.” On multiple occasions in late June and early July 2017, the President directed aides not to publicly disclose the emails, and he then dictated a statement about the meeting to be issued by Donald Trump Jr. describing the meeting as about adoption.

Evidence

1. The President Learns About the Existence of Emails Concerning the June 9, 2016 Trump Tower Meeting

In mid-June 2017—the same week that the President first asked Lewandowski to pass a message to Sessions—senior Administration officials became aware of emails exchanged during
the campaign arranging a meeting between Donald Trump Jr., Paul Manafort, Jared Kushner, and a Russian attorney.\textsuperscript{663} As described in Volume I, Section IV.A.5, supra, the emails stated that the "Crown [P]rosecutor of Russia" had offered "to provide the Trump campaign with some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia" as part of "Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump."\textsuperscript{664} Trump Jr. responded, "[I]f it's what you say I love it,"\textsuperscript{665} and he, Kushner, and Manafort met with the Russian attorney and several other Russian individuals at Trump Tower on June 9, 2016.\textsuperscript{666} At the meeting, the Russian attorney claimed that funds derived from illegal activities in Russia were provided to Hillary Clinton and other Democrats, and the Russian attorney then spoke about the Magnitsky Act, a 2012 U.S. statute that imposed financial and travel sanctions on Russian officials and that had resulted in a retaliatory ban in Russia on U.S. adoptions of Russian children.\textsuperscript{667}

According to written answers submitted by the President in response to questions from this Office, the President had no recollection of learning of the meeting or the emails setting it up at the time the meeting occurred or at any other time before the election.\textsuperscript{668}

The Trump Campaign had previously received a document request from SSCI that called for the production of various information, including, "[a] list and a description of all meetings" between any "individual affiliated with the Trump campaign" and "any individual formally or informally affiliated with the Russian government or Russian business interests which took place between June 16, 2015, and 12 pm on January 20, 2017," and associated records.\textsuperscript{669} Trump Organization attorneys became aware of the June 9 meeting no later than the first week of June 2017, when they began interviewing the meeting participants, and the Trump Organization attorneys provided the emails setting up the meeting to the President’s personal counsel.\textsuperscript{670} Mark Corallo, who had been hired as a spokesman for the President’s personal legal team, recalled that he learned about the June 9 meeting around June 21 or 22, 2017.\textsuperscript{671} Priebus recalled learning about the June 9 meeting from Fox News host Sean Hannity in late June 2017.\textsuperscript{672} Priebus notified one

\textsuperscript{663} Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 1; Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 2.
\textsuperscript{664} RG000061 (6/3/16 Email, Goldstone to Trump Jr.); @DonaldJTrumpJR 7/11/17 (11:01 a.m. ET) Tweet.
\textsuperscript{665} RG000061 (6/3/16 Email, Trump Jr. to Goldstone); @DonaldJTrumpJR 7/11/17 (11:01 a.m. ET) Tweet.
\textsuperscript{666} Samochornov 7/12/17 302, at 4.
\textsuperscript{667} See Volume I, Section IV.A.5, supra (describing meeting in detail).
\textsuperscript{668} Written Responses of Donald J. Trump (Nov. 20, 2018), at 8 (Response to Question I, Parts (a) through (c)). The President declined to answer questions about his knowledge of the June 9 meeting or other events after the election.
\textsuperscript{669} DJTFFP_SCO_PDF_00000001-02 (5/17/17 Letter, SSCI to Donald J. Trump for President, Inc.).
\textsuperscript{670} Goldstone 2/8/18 302, at 12; 6/2/17 and 6/5/17 Emails, Goldstone & Garten; Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 3; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2.
\textsuperscript{671} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 3.
\textsuperscript{672} Priebus 4/5/18 302, at 7.
of the President's personal attorneys, who told Priebus he was already working on it. By late June, several advisors recalled receiving media inquiries that could relate to the June 9 meeting.

2. The President Directs Communications Staff Not to Publicly Disclose Information About the June 9 Meeting

Communications advisors Hope Hicks and Josh Raffel recalled discussing with Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump that the emails were damaging and would inevitably be leaked. Hicks and Raffel advised that the best strategy was to proactively release the emails to the press. On or about June 22, 2017, Hicks attended a meeting in the White House residence with the President, Kushner, and Ivanka Trump. According to Hicks, Kushner said that he wanted to fill the President in on something that had been discovered in the documents he was to provide to the congressional committees involving a meeting with him, Manafort, and Trump Jr. Kushner brought a folder of documents to the meeting and tried to show them to the President, but the President stopped Kushner and said he did not want to know about it, shutting the conversation down.

On June 28, 2017, Hicks viewed the emails at Kushner's attorney's office. She recalled being shocked by the emails because they looked "really bad." The next day, Hicks spoke privately with the President to mention her concern about the emails, which she understood were soon going to be shared with Congress. The President seemed upset because too many people knew about the emails and he told Hicks that just one lawyer should deal with the matter. The President indicated that he did not think the emails would leak, but said they would leak if everyone had access to them.

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674 Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 3; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8; Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 3.
676 Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 2-3, 5; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8.
677 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 6-7; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 1.
678 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 7; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 1.
679 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 7; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 1. Counsel for Ivanka Trump provided an attorney proffer that is consistent with Hicks's account and with the other events involving Ivanka Trump set forth in this section of the report. Kushner said that he did not recall talking to the President at this time about the June 9 meeting or the underlying emails. Kushner 4/11/18 302, at 30.
680 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 1-2.
681 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2.
682 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8.
683 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2-3; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8.
684 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8.
Later that day, Hicks, Kushner, and Ivanka Trump went together to talk to the President.685 Hicks recalled that Kushner told the President the June 9 meeting was not a big deal and was about Russian adoption, but that emails existed setting up the meeting.686 Hicks said she wanted to get in front of the story and have Trump Jr. release the emails as part of an interview with “softball questions.”687 The President said he did not want to know about it and they should not go to the press.688 Hicks warned the President that the emails were “really bad” and the story would be “massive” when it broke, but the President was insistent that he did not want to talk about it and said he did not want details.689 Hicks recalled that the President asked Kushner when his document production was due.690 Kushner responded that it would be a couple of weeks and the President said, “then leave it alone.”691 Hicks also recalled that the President said Kushner’s attorney should give the emails to whomever he needed to give them to, but the President did not think they would be leaked to the press.692 Raffel later heard from Hicks that the President had directed the group not to be proactive in disclosing the emails because the President believed they would not leak.693

3. The President Directs Trump Jr.’s Response to Press Inquiries About the June 9 Meeting

The following week, the President departed on an overseas trip for the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, accompanied by Hicks, Raffel, Kushner, and Ivanka Trump, among others.694 On July 7, 2017, while the President was overseas, Hicks and Raffel learned that the New York Times was working a story about the June 9 meeting.695 The next day, Hicks told the President about the story and he directed her not to comment.696 Hicks thought the President’s reaction was odd because he usually considered not responding to the press to be the ultimate sin.697 Later that day, Hicks and the President again spoke about the story.698 Hicks recalled that the President asked

685 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 8; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2.
686 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 9.
687 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2-3.
688 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 2-3; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 9.
689 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 9.
690 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3.
691 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3.
692 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 9.
693 Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 5.
694 Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 6.
695 Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 6-7; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3.
696 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 10; Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3.
697 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 10.
698 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3.
her what the meeting had been about, and she said that she had been told the meeting was about Russian adoption.699 The President responded, "then just say that."700

On the flight home from the G20 on July 8, 2017, Hicks obtained a draft statement about the meeting to be released by Trump Jr. and brought it to the President.701 The draft statement began with a reference to the information that was offered by the Russians in setting up the meeting: "I was asked to have a meeting by an acquaintance I knew from the 2013 Miss Universe pageant with an individual who I was told might have information helpful to the campaign."702 Hicks again wanted to disclose the entire story, but the President directed that the statement not be issued because it said too much.703 The President told Hicks to say only that Trump Jr. took a brief meeting and it was about Russian adoption.704 After speaking with the President, Hicks texted Trump Jr. a revised statement on the June 9 meeting that read:

It was a short meeting. I asked Jared and Paul to stop by. We discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children that was active and popular with American families years ago and was since ended by the Russian government, but it was not a campaign issue at that time and there was no follow up.705

Hicks’s text concluded, "Are you ok with this? Attributed to you."706 Trump Jr. responded by text message that he wanted to add the word “primarily” before “discussed” so that the statement would read, "We primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children."707 Trump Jr. texted that he wanted the change because “[t]hey started with some Hillary thing which was bs and some other nonsense which we shot down fast.”708 Hicks texted back, "I think that’s right too but boss man worried it invites a lot of questions[…] [U]ltimately [d]efer to you and [your attorney] on that word Bc I know it’s important and I think the mention of a campaign issue adds something to it in case we have to go further."709 Trump Jr. responded, "If I don’t have it in there it appears as though I’m lying later when they inevitably leak something."710 Trump Jr.’s statement—adding

699 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 10.
700 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 3; see Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 10.
701 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 4.
702 Hicks 7/8/17 Notes.
703 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 4-5; Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 11.
704 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 11.
705 SCR011a_000004 (7/8/17 Text Message, Hicks to Trump Jr.).
706 SCR011a_000004 (7/8/17 Text Message, Hicks to Trump Jr.).
707 SCR011a_000005 (7/8/17 Text Message, Trump Jr. to Hicks).
708 SCR011a_000005 (7/8/17 Text Message, Trump Jr. to Hicks).
709 SCR011a_000005 (7/8/17 Text Message, Hicks to Trump Jr.).
710 SCR011a_000006 (7/8/17 Text Message, Trump Jr. to Hicks).
the word “primarily” and making other minor additions—was then provided to the New York Times. The full statement provided to the Times stated:

It was a short introductory meeting. I asked Jared and Paul to stop by. We primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children that was active and popular with American families years ago and was since ended by the Russian government, but it was not a campaign issue at the time and there was no follow up. I was asked to attend the meeting by an acquaintance, but was not told the name of the person I would be meeting with beforehand. The statement did not mention the offer of derogatory information about Clinton or any discussion of the Magnitsky Act or U.S. sanctions, which were the principal subjects of the meeting, as described in Volume I, Section IV.A.5, supra.

A short while later, while still on Air Force One, Hicks learned that Priebus knew about the emails, which further convinced her that additional information about the June 9 meeting would leak and the White House should be proactive and get in front of the story. Hicks recalled again going to the President to urge him that they should be fully transparent about the June 9 meeting, but he again said no, telling Hicks, “You’ve given a statement. We’re done.”

Later on the flight home, Hicks went to the President’s cabin, where the President was on the phone with one of his personal attorneys. At one point the President handed the phone to Hicks, and the attorney told Hicks that he had been working with Circa News on a separate story, and that she should not talk to the New York Times.

4. The Media Reports on the June 9, 2016 Meeting

Before the President’s flight home from the G20 landed, the New York Times published its story about the June 9, 2016 meeting. In addition to the statement from Trump Jr., the Times story also quoted a statement from Corallo on behalf of the President’s legal team suggesting that the meeting might have been a setup by individuals working with the firm that produced the Steele reporting. Corallo also worked with Circa News on a story published an hour later that

711 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 6; see Jo Becker et al., Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign, New York Times (July 8, 2017).
712 See Jo Becker et al., Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign, New York Times (July 8, 2017).
713 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 6; Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 9-10.
714 Hicks 12/7/17 302, at 12; Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 10.
715 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 7.
716 Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 7.
717 See Jo Becker et al., Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign, New York Times (July 8, 2017); Raffel 2/8/18 302, at 10.
718 See Jo Becker et al., Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign, New York Times (July 8, 2017).
questioned whether Democratic operatives had arranged the June 9 meeting to create the appearance of improper connections between Russia and Trump family members.\textsuperscript{719} Hicks was upset about Corallo’s public statement and called him that evening to say the President had not approved the statement.\textsuperscript{720}

The next day, July 9, 2017, Hicks and the President called Corallo together and the President criticized Corallo for the statement he had released.\textsuperscript{721} Corallo told the President the statement had been authorized and further observed that Trump Jr.’s statement was inaccurate and that a document existed that would contradict it.\textsuperscript{722} Corallo said that he purposely used the term “document” to refer to the emails setting up the June 9 meeting because he did not know what the President knew about the emails.\textsuperscript{723} Corallo recalled that when he referred to the “document” on the call with the President, Hicks responded that only a few people had access to it and said “it will never get out.”\textsuperscript{724} Corallo took contemporaneous notes of the call that say: “Also mention existence of doc. Hope says ‘only a few people have it. It will never get out.’”\textsuperscript{725} Hicks later told investigators that she had no memory of making that comment and had always believed the emails would eventually be leaked, but she might have been channeling the President on the phone call because it was clear to her throughout her conversations with the President that he did not think the emails would leak.\textsuperscript{726}

On July 11, 2017, Trump Jr. posted redacted images of the emails setting up the June 9 meeting on Twitter; the New York Times reported that he did so “[a]fter being told that The Times was about to publish the content of the emails.”\textsuperscript{727} Later that day, the media reported that the President had been personally involved in preparing Trump Jr.’s initial statement to the New York Times that had claimed the meeting “primarily” concerned “a program about the adoption of Russian children.”\textsuperscript{728} Over the next several days, the President’s personal counsel repeatedly and

\textsuperscript{719} See Donald Trump Jr. gathered members of campaign for meeting with Russian lawyer before election, Circa News (July 8, 2017).

\textsuperscript{720} Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 8; Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 6-7.

\textsuperscript{721} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 7.

\textsuperscript{722} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 7.

\textsuperscript{723} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 7-9.

\textsuperscript{724} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 8.

\textsuperscript{725} Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 8; Corallo 7/9/17 Notes (“Sunday 9th – Hope calls w/ POTUS on line”). Corallo said he is “100% confident” that Hicks said “It will never get out” on the call. Corallo 2/15/18 302, at 9.

\textsuperscript{726} Hicks 3/13/18 302, at 9.

\textsuperscript{727} @DonaldJTrumpJr 7/11/17 (11:01 a.m. ET) Tweet; Jo Becker et al., Russian Dirt on Clinton? ‘I Love It,’ Donald Trump Jr. Said, New York Times (July 11, 2017).

\textsuperscript{728} See, e.g., Peter Baker & Maggie Haberman, Rancor at White House as Russia Story Refuses to Let the Page Turn, New York Times (July 11, 2017) (reporting that the President “signed off” on Trump Jr.’s statement).
inaccurately denied that the President played any role in drafting Trump Jr.’s statement. After consulting with the President on the issue, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told the media that the President “certainly didn’t dictate” the statement, but that “he weighed in, offered suggestions like any father would do.” Several months later, the President’s personal counsel stated in a private communication to the Special Counsel’s Office that “the President dictated a short but accurate response to the New York Times article on behalf of his son, Donald Trump, Jr.” The President later told the press that it was “irrelevant” whether he dictated the statement and said, “It’s a statement to the New York Times. . . . That’s not a statement to a high tribunal of judges.”

On July 12, 2017, the Special Counsel’s Office related to the June 9 meeting and those who attended the June 9 meeting.

On July 19, 2017, the President had his follow-up meeting with Lewandowski and then met with reporters for the New York Times. In addition to criticizing Sessions in his Times interview, the President addressed the June 9, 2016 meeting and said he “didn’t know anything about the meeting” at the time. The President added, “As I’ve said—most other people, you know, when they call up and say, ‘By the way, we have information on your opponent,’ I think most politicians — I was just with a lot of people, they said . . ., ‘Who wouldn’t have taken a meeting like that?’

Analysis

In analyzing the President’s actions regarding the disclosure of information about the June 9 meeting, the following evidence is relevant to the elements of obstruction of justice:

a. Obstructive act. On at least three occasions between June 29, 2017, and July 9, 2017, the President directed Hicks and others not to publicly disclose information about the June

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729 See, e.g., David Wright, Trump lawyer: President was aware of “nothing”, CNN (July 12, 2017) (quoting the President’s personal attorney as saying, “I wasn’t involved in the statement drafting at all nor was the President.”); see also Good Morning America, ABC (July 12, 2017) (“The President didn’t sign off on anything. . . . The President wasn’t involved in that.”); Meet the Press, NBC (July 16, 2017) (“I do want to be clear—the President was not involved in the drafting of the statement.”).

730 Sarah Sanders, White House Daily Briefing, C-SPAN (Aug. 1, 2017); Sanders 7/3/18 302, at 9 (the President told Sanders he “weighed in, as any father would” and knew she intended to tell the press what he said).

731 1/29/18 Letter, President’s Personal Counsel to Special Counsel’s Office, at 18.

732 Remarks by President Trump in Press Gaggle (June 15, 2018).

733 Grand Jury

734 Peter Baker et al., Excerpts From The Times’s Interview With Trump, New York Times (July 19, 2017).

735 Peter Baker et al., Excerpts From The Times’s Interview With Trump, New York Times (July 19, 2017).
9, 2016 meeting between senior campaign officials and a Russian attorney. On June 29, Hicks warned the President that the emails setting up the June 9 meeting were “really bad” and the story would be “massive” when it broke, but the President told her and Kushner to “leave it alone.” Early on July 8, after Hicks told the President the New York Times was working on a story about the June 9 meeting, the President directed her not to comment, even though Hicks said that the President usually considered not responding to the press to be the ultimate sin. Later that day, the President rejected Trump Jr.’s draft statement that would have acknowledged that the meeting was with “an individual who I was told might have information helpful to the campaign.” The President then dictated a statement to Hicks that said the meeting was about Russian adoption (which the President had twice been told was discussed at the meeting). The statement dictated by the President did not mention the offer of derogatory information about Clinton.

Each of these efforts by the President involved his communications team and was directed at the press. They would amount to obstructive acts only if the President, by taking these actions, sought to withhold information from or mislead congressional investigators or the Special Counsel. On May 17, 2017, the President’s campaign received a document request from SSCI that clearly covered the June 9 meeting and underlying emails, and those documents also plainly would have been relevant to the Special Counsel’s investigation.

But the evidence does not establish that the President took steps to prevent the emails or other information about the June 9 meeting from being provided to Congress or the Special Counsel. The series of discussions in which the President sought to limit access to the emails and prevent their public release occurred in the context of developing a press strategy. The only evidence we have of the President discussing the production of documents to Congress or the Special Counsel is the conversation on June 29, 2017, when Hicks recalled the President acknowledging that Kushner’s attorney should provide emails related to the June 9 meeting to whomever he needed to give them to. We do not have evidence of what the President discussed with his own lawyers at that time.

b. **Nexus to an official proceeding.** As described above, by the time of the President’s attempts to prevent the public release of the emails regarding the June 9 meeting, the existence of a grand jury investigation supervised by the Special Counsel was public knowledge, and the President had been told that the emails were responsive to congressional inquiries. To satisfy the nexus requirement, however, it would be necessary to show that preventing the release of the emails to the public would have the natural and probable effect of impeding the grand jury proceeding or congressional inquiries. As noted above, the evidence does not establish that the President sought to prevent disclosure of the emails in those official proceedings.

c. **Intent.** The evidence establishes the President’s substantial involvement in the communications strategy related to information about his campaign’s connections to Russia and his desire to minimize public disclosures about those connections. The President became aware of the emails no later than June 29, 2017, when he discussed them with Hicks and Kushner, and he could have been aware of them as early as June 2, 2017, when lawyers for the Trump Organization began interviewing witnesses who participated in the June 9 meeting. The President thereafter repeatedly rejected the advice of Hicks and other staffers to publicly release information about the June 9 meeting. The President expressed concern that multiple people had access to the emails and instructed Hicks that only one lawyer should deal with the matter. And the President
dictated a statement to be released by Trump Jr. in response to the first press accounts of the June 9 meeting that said the meeting was about adoption.

But as described above, the evidence does not establish that the President intended to prevent the Special Counsel’s Office or Congress from obtaining the emails setting up the June 9 meeting or other information about that meeting. The statement recorded by Corallo—that the emails “will never get out”—can be explained as reflecting a belief that the emails would not be made public if the President’s press strategy were followed, even if the emails were provided to Congress and the Special Counsel.

H. The President’s Further Efforts to Have the Attorney General Take Over the Investigation

Overview

From summer 2017 through 2018, the President attempted to have Attorney General Sessions reverse his recusal, take control of the Special Counsel’s investigation, and order an investigation of Hillary Clinton.

Evidence

1. The President Again Seeks to Have Sessions Reverse his Recusal

After returning Sessions’s resignation letter at the end of May 2017, but before the President’s July 19, 2017 New York Times interview in which he publicly criticized Sessions for recusing from the Russia investigation, the President took additional steps to have Sessions reverse his recusal. In particular, at some point after the May 17, 2017 appointment of the Special Counsel, Sessions recalled, the President called him at home and asked if Sessions would “unrecuse” himself.736 According to Sessions, the President asked him to reverse his recusal so that Sessions could direct the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute Hillary Clinton, and the “gist” of the conversation was that the President wanted Sessions to unrecuse from “all of it,” including the Special Counsel’s Russia investigation.737 Sessions listened but did not respond, and he did not reverse his recusal or order an investigation of Clinton.738

In early July 2017, the President asked Staff Secretary Rob Porter what he thought of Associate Attorney General Rachel Brand.739 Porter recalled that the President asked him if Brand was good, tough, and “on the team.”740 The President also asked if Porter thought Brand was interested in being responsible for the Special Counsel’s investigation and whether she would want

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736 Sessions 1/17/18 302, at 15. That was the second time that the President asked Sessions to reverse his recusal from campaign-related investigations. See Volume II, Section II.C.1, supra (describing President’s March 2017 request at Mar-a-Lago for Sessions to unrecuse).

737 Sessions 1/17/18 302, at 15.

738 Sessions 1/17/18 302, at 15.
