

## **Statement of Chairman Richard Burr**

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June 13, 2017

Attorney General Sessions, I appreciate your willingness to appear before the Committee today. I thank you for your years of dedicated service as a member of this body and your recent leadership of the Department of Justice.

As I mentioned when Director Comey appeared before us last week, this Committee's role is to be the eyes and ears for the other 85 members of the Senate and for the American people, ensuring that the Intelligence Community is operating lawfully and has the necessary tools to keep America safe. The Community is a large and diverse place: We recognize the gravity of our investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections, but I remind our constituents that while we investigate Russia, we are scrutinizing CIA's budget, NSA's 702 program, our nation's satellite programs, and the entire IC's efforts to recruit and retain the best talent in the world.

More often than not, the Committee conducts its work behind closed doors – a necessary step to ensure that our most sensitive sources and methods are protected. The sanctity of those sources and methods are at the heart of the Intelligence Community's ability to keep us, and our allies, safe from those who seek to do us harm. I have said repeatedly that I do

not believe anything the Committee does should be done in public. But, I also recognize the gravity of the Committee's current investigation and the need for the American people to be presented the facts so that they may make their own judgments. It is for that reason that this is the Committee's 10<sup>th</sup> open hearing of 2017 – more than double that held by the Committee in any recent year – and the 5<sup>th</sup> on the topic of Russian interference.

Attorney General Sessions, this venue is your opportunity to separate fact from fiction and to set the record straight on a number of allegations reported in the press. For example, there are several issues that I am hopeful we will address today:

1. Did you have any meetings with Russian officials or their proxies on behalf of the Trump campaign or during your time as Attorney General?
2. What was your involvement with candidate-Trump's foreign policy team, and what were their possible interactions with Russians?
3. Why did you decide to recuse yourself from the Government's Russia investigation? And,
4. What role, if any, did you play in the removal of then-FBI Director Comey?

I look forward to a candid and honest discussion as we continue to pursue the truth behind Russian interference in our 2016 elections. The Committee's experienced staff is interviewing the relevant parties – having spoken with more than 35 individuals to date, to include just yesterday, an interview of Secretary Jeh Johnson. We also continue to review some of the most sensitive intelligence in our country's possession. As I have said previously, we will establish the facts—separate from rampant speculation—and lay them out for the American people to make their own judgement. Only then will we, as a nation, be able to put this episode to rest and look to the future.

I am hopeful that Members will focus their questions today on the Russia investigation and not squander this opportunity by taking political or partisan shots.

The Vice Chairman and I continue to lead this investigation, together, on what is a highly charged political issue. We may disagree at times, but we remain a unified team with a dedicated, focused, and professional staff working tirelessly on behalf of the American people to find the truth. The Committee has made much progress as the political winds blow forcefully around us – and I think all Members would agree that despite a torrent of public debate on who and what Committee might be best suited to lead on

this issue, the Intelligence Committee has lived up to its obligation to move forward with purpose and above politics.

With that, I'll turn to the Vice Chairman for any remarks he may have

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[VICE CHAIRMAN REMARKS]

Attorney General, would you please stand and raise your right hand as I administer the oath . . . “do you solemnly swear to give this Committee the truth, the full truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

Thank you, please be seated. Attorney General Sessions, the floor is yours.