

**Chairman Richard Burr**  
**Prepared Remarks**

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June 8, 2017

Director Comey, I appreciate your willingness to appear before the Committee today and thank you for dedicated service and leadership of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Your appearance today speaks to the trust we have built up over the years and I am looking forward to an open and candid discussion.

I'd like to remind my colleagues that we will reconvene in closed session at 1 pm today and ask that you reserve for that venue any questions that might get into classified information.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence exists to certify for the other 85 members of the Senate and the American people that the Intelligence Community is operating lawfully and has the necessary authorities and tools to accomplish its mission and keep America safe. Part of our mission – beyond the oversight we continue to provide to the IC and its activities – is to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. The Committee's work continues -- this hearing represents part of that effort.

Jim, allegations have been swirling in the press for the last several weeks, and today is your opportunity to set the record straight. Yesterday, I

read with interest your Statement for the Record, and I think it provides some helpful detail surrounding your interactions with the President. It clearly lays out your understanding of those discussions, actions you took following each conversation, and your state of mind. I very much appreciate your candor, and I think it is helpful as we all work to determine the ultimate truth behind possible Russian interference in our 2016 elections.

Your statement also provides texture and context to your interactions with the President, from your vantage point, and outlines a strained relationship. The American people need to hear your side of the story, just as they need to hear the President's description of events.

These interactions also highlight the importance of this Committee's ongoing investigation. Our experienced staff is interviewing all the relevant parties and some of the most sensitive intelligence in our country's possession. 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 move forward and put this episode to rest.

There are several outstanding issues not addressed in your statement that I hope we can clear up for the American people today.

- Did the President’s request for “loyalty,” your impression that the one-on-one dinner on January 27<sup>th</sup> was “at least in part” an effort to create some sort of patronage relationship, or his March 30<sup>th</sup> phone call asking what you could do to “lift the cloud” of the Russia investigation in any way alter your approach or the FBI’s investigation into General Flynn, or the broader investigation into Russia and possible links to the campaign?
- In your opinion, did potential Russian efforts to establish links with individuals in the Trump orbit rise to a level we could define as “collusion” or a counterintelligence concern?
- There has been significant public speculation about your decision making related to the Clinton email investigation – why did you decide to publicly announce FBI’s recommendation that the Department of Justice not pursue criminal charges? You have described it as a choice between a bad decision and a worse decision. The American people need to understand the facts behind your actions.

This Committee is uniquely suited to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. We also have a unified bipartisan approach to

what is a highly charged partisan issue. Russian activity during the 2016 election may have been aimed at one party's candidate, but as my colleague Sen. Rubio says frequently, in 2018 and 2020, it could be aimed at anyone at home and abroad. My colleague Sen. Warner and I have worked hard to stay in lockstep on this investigation. We have our differences on approach at times, but I have consistently stressed that we need to be a team, and he agrees.

We must keep these questions above politics and partisanship – it's too important to be tainted by anyone trying to score political points.