

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on the Judiciary

Washington, DC 20515-6216
One Hundred Fifteenth Congress

June 12, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions,

In his testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, former FBI Director James Comey offered compelling testimony about President Trump's attempts to influence the ongoing Russia probe. On review, it seems that you play a direct role in several aspects of his story. Given that you have now cancelled your scheduled appearance before the House and Senate appropriations committees—a second time, and for the express purpose of avoiding questions about the Russia investigation—the need for your public response is more pressing than ever.

As Members of the House Judiciary Committee, we write to ask that you provide us with information relating to your knowledge concerning recent charges by Mr. Comey regarding improper conduct by the President; the veracity of your disclosure regarding meetings with Russian officials; and your compliance with the terms of your recusal. We ask these questions to fulfill our responsibility to protect the integrity of the Department of Justice and the Office of the Attorney General, whether or not you are recused from an ongoing investigation. If necessary, we are willing to receive any portion of your response in a classified setting.

1. In his recent testimony, Mr. Comey described a February 14 meeting in the Oval Office. President Trump asked you to leave the room. This was one of several occasions where the President, one-on-one with Director Comey, reportedly asked your subordinate to drop the investigation into former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.¹ Can you confirm that these events occurred? Please describe what transpired.
2. Your spokesperson has since indicated that, after the February 14 meeting, you told Director Comey that “the FBI and the Department of Justice needed to be careful about following appropriate policies regarding contacts with the White House.”² Can you explain why you apparently failed to enforce these “appropriate policies” when President

¹ *Open Hearing with Former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation James Comey before the S. Comm. on Intelligence*, June 8, 2017 (statement of former FBI Director James Comey).

² Josh Gerstein, *Sessions pushes back on Comey testimony*, POLITICO, June 6, 2017.

Trump directed you to leave the Oval Office so that he could speak to Director Comey alone? Have you taken any specific actions to limit inappropriate communications between the White House and the Department of Justice, and if so, how did you do so?

3. In his Senate testimony, Mr. Comey suggested that the FBI was “aware of facts that [he] can’t discuss in an open setting that would make [your] continued engagement in a Russia-related investigation problematic.” He was aware of these facts at least two weeks before you announced your recusal. To what facts might Mr. Comey be referring?
4. After omitting the meetings from your initial testimony to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, you disclosed two meetings with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.³ You apparently chose not to disclose a reported third meeting with the Ambassador.⁴ Reports also indicate that you failed to disclose many of these contacts on your application for a security clearance.⁵ Why did you fail to disclose these contacts? Do you have any plan to once again revise your Senate testimony? Outside of these meetings with the Ambassador, have you had any additional contacts with any representative of the Russian government?
5. Given that your recusal appears to cover any ongoing investigation into contacts between the Trump campaign and the Russian government, and given the President’s statement that he fired Director Comey because of “this Russia thing with Trump and Russia,”⁶ please explain what enabled you to participate in the decision to terminate the Director. Is your recusal from “any existing or future investigations of matters related in any way to the campaigns for President of the United States” still in effect?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We note that, as of this writing, the Department owes us a response to at least eight outstanding letters. We ask that you respond to each of these requests for information as soon as possible. In any event, we ask that you respond to this letter no later than June 26, 2017.

Sincerely,

³ Letter from U.S. Attorney General Jefferson Sessions to Sen. Charles Grassley, Chairman, S. Comm. on the Judiciary, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member, S. Comm. on the Judiciary, Mar. 6, 2017.

⁴ For months, the fact of a third meeting has been well-substantiated by news reports and other open source materials. See *Resolution of Inquiry Requesting the President And Directing the Attorney General to Transmit, Respectively, Certain Documents to the House of Representatives Relating to Communications with the Government of Russia*, H. Rep. 115-74 (Mar. 31, 2017). “The Attorney General’s supplemental testimony discloses two meetings with the Russian ambassador—at the convention in July 2016 and in his office in September 2016. It does not, however, acknowledge the possibility of a third meeting with Ambassador Kislyak. . . . Neither the Attorney General’s initial testimony nor his supplementary statement account for any conversation that may have taken place at this April meeting.” *Id.* at 12.

⁵ Manu Raja & Evan Perez, *AG Sessions did not disclose Russia meetings in security clearance forms, DOJ says*, CNN, May 24, 2017.

⁶ James Griffiths, *Trump says he considered “this Russia thing” before firing FBI Director Comey*, CNN, May 12, 2017

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