

NBC News exclusive interview with Donald Trump
Partial transcript
May 11, 2017

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LESTER HOLT: Monday, you met with the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosen--
Rosenstein--

DONALD TRUMP: Right.

LESTER HOLT: Did you ask for a recommendation? [OVER TALK]

DONALD TRUMP: Uh, what I did is I was going to fire I-- my decision, it was not --

LESTER HOLT: You had made the decision before they came in the room?

DONALD TRUMP: I-- I was going to fire Comey. Uh, I-- there's no good time to do it, by the way. Uh, they-- they were-- [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: Because you letter, you said I-- I, I accepted their recommendation, so you had already made the decision.

DONALD TRUMP: Oh, I was gonna fire regardless of recommendation--

LESTER HOLT: So there was-- [OVER TALK]

DONALD TRUMP: He made-- he made a recommendation, he's highly respected, very good guy, very smart guy, uh, the Democrats like him, the Republicans like him, uh, he made a recommendation, but regardless of recommendation, I was going to fire Comey.

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LESTER HOLT: Let me ask you about your termination letter to Mr. Comey. You write: "I greatly appreciate you informing me on three separate occasions that I am not under investigation." Why did you put that in there?

DONALD TRUMP: Because he told me that. I mean he told me it.

LESTER HOLT: He told you weren't under investigation [OVER TALK] regardless--

DONALD TRUMP: Yeah and I've-- I've heard that from others I think--

LESTER HOLT: Was it in a phone call, did you meet face to face?

DONALD TRUMP: Uh, I had a dinner with him. He wanted to have dinner because he wanted to stay on. We had a very nice dinner at the White House [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: He asked for the dinner?

DONALD TRUMP: A dinner was arranged, I think he asked for the dinner. And he wanted to stay on as the FBI head. And I said I'll, you know, consider and we'll see what happens--

But we had a very nice dinner. And at that time, he told me you are not under investigation. [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: That was--

DONALD TRUMP: Which I knew anyway.

LESTER HOLT: That was one meeting. What was it, what were the other two? [OVER TALK]

DONALD TRUMP: First of all, when you're under investigation, you're giving all sorts of documents and everything. I knew I wasn't under and I heard it was stated at the committee, at some committee level, that I wasn't. Number one.

LESTER HOLT: So that didn't come directly from him?

DONALD TRUMP: [OVER TALK] Then during a phone call he said it. And then during another phone call he said it. So he said it once at dinner and then he said it twice during phone calls.

LESTER HOLT: Did you call him?

DONALD TRUMP: Uh, in one case I called him and one case he called me.

LESTER HOLT: And did you ask, "Am I under investigation?"

DONALD TRUMP: I actually asked him, yes. I said, "If it's possible, would you let me know am I under investigation?" He said you are not under investigation.

LESTER HOLT: But he's, he's given sworn testimony that there is an ongoing investigation into the Trump campaign and possible collusion with the Russian government? You were the centerpiece of the Trump campaign so [OVER TALK] was he being truthful when he says you weren't under investigation?

DONALD TRUMP: [OVER TALK] Well, all I can tell you is, well I know what, I know that I'm not under investigation. Me. Personally. I'm not talking about campaigns. I'm not talking about anything else. I'm not under investigation.

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DONALD TRUMP: He made-- he made a recommendation, he's highly respected, very good guy, very smart guy, uh the Democrats like him, the Republicans like him, uh he made a recommendation but regardless of recommendation I was going to fire Comey knowing, there was no good time to do it. And in fact when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said you know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story, it's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won. And the reason they should have won it is the electoral college is almost impossible for a Republican to win. Very hard. Because you start off at such a disadvantage. So everybody was thinking, they should have won the election. This was an excuse for having lost an election.

LESTER HOLT: [OVER TALK] Okay, are you angry with, angry with Mr. Comey because of his Russia investigation?

DONALD TRUMP: I just want somebody that's competent. I am a big fan of the FBI, I love the FBI. [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: But were you a fan of him taking up that investigation?

DONALD TRUMP: I think that--about the Hillary Clinton investigation?

LESTER HOLT: About the Russia investigation and possible links [OVER TALK]

DONALD TRUMP: Look, look, let me tell you. As far as I'm concerned, I want that thing to be absolutely done properly. When I did this now I said, I probably, maybe will confuse people, maybe I'll expand that, you know, lengthen the time because it should be over with, in my opinion, should have been over with a long time ago. Cause all it is, is an excuse but I said to myself, I might even lengthen out the investigation but I have to do the right thing for the American people. He's the wrong man for that position.

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LESTER HOLT: Did you ask him to drop the investigation?

DONALD TRUMP: No. Never.

LESTER HOLT: Did anyone from the White House?

DONALD TRUMP: No, in fact I want the investigation speeded up.

LESTER HOLT: Did anyone from the White House ask him to, to end the investigation?

DONALD TRUMP: [OVER TALK] No. No. Why would we do that? [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: [OVER TALK] Any surrogates on behalf of the White House

DONALD TRUMP: Not that I know of. Look I want to find out if there was a problem with an election having to do with Russia. Or by the way, anyb- any anybody else. Any other country. And I want that to be so strong and so good. And I want it to happen. I also want to have a really competent, capable director. He's not. He's a showboat.. He's not my man or not my man. I didn't appoint him. He was appointed long before me. But I want somebody who's going to do a great job. And I will tell you we're looking at candidates right now who could be spectacular. And that's what I want for the FBI.

LESTER HOLT: What you said a moment ago about supporting the idea of investigation, a lot of people would find it hard to believe that the man who just said that tweeted very recently it's a total hoax. It's a taxpayer charade. Oh I think that looking into me and the campaign, look, I have nothing to do, this was set up by the Democrats. there's no collusion between me and my campaign and the Russians. The other thing is the Russians did not affect the vote. And everybody seems to think that. There is an investigation underway though, an FBI investigation, is that a charade?

DONALD TRUMP: Well I don't know if it's an FBI or -- there's so many investigations -- I don't know if it's an FBI investigation or if it's Congress, if it's the Senate and the House [OVER TALK]

LESTER HOLT: Well James Comey testified there was an FBI Investigation. [OVER TALK]

DONALD TRUMP: Well yea but I think they're also helping the House and the Senate so you probably have FBI but you have House, you have Senate -- they have other investigations.

LESTER HOLT: But when you put out tweets it's a total hoax, it's a taxpayer charade and you're looking for a new FBI Director are you not sending that person a message to lay off?

DONALD TRUMP: No I'm not doing that. I think that we have to get back to work but I want to find out -- I want to get to the bottom. If Russia hacked, if Russia did anything having to do with our election I want to know about it.

LESTER HOLT: Well there's already intelligence from virtually every intelligence agency that yes that happened --

DONALD TRUMP: I'll tell you this -- uh if Russia or anybody else is trying to interfere with our elections I think it's a horrible thing and I want to get to the bottom of it and I want to make sure it will never ever happen.