

- Special counsel Robert Mueller released his report on Thursday, April 18th.
 - The 448-page report is split into two “volumes”: One describing the ties between Donald Trump’s campaign and Russia, and another outlining 10 “episodes” where Mueller said there was potential evidence of obstruction.
 - Mueller found no criminal conspiracy between the president’s team and Russia.
 - Mueller declined to recommend charges against Trump but found several instances where the president tried to influence or shut down the investigation.
- Conspiracy or collusion?
 - For much of Mueller’s time as special counsel, the media has focused on possible collusion between Trump’s campaign and Russia.
 - Collusion has no legal definition and is not a federal crime but Mueller did look into whether the Trump campaign purposefully worked with Russia to win the 2016 election.
 - This would be considered conspiracy, which is a federal crime.
 - Some things he found and described in the section about Trump/Russia connection:¹
 - “Summer 2016, Russian outreach to the Trump Campaign continued into the summer of 2016, as candidate Trump was becoming the presumptive Republican nominee for President. On June 9, 2016, for example, a Russian lawyer met with senior Trump Campaign officials Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, and campaign chairman Paul Manafort to deliver what the email proposing the meeting had described as “official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary.” the materials were offered to Trump Jr. as “part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump.” The written communications setting up the meeting showed that the Campaign anticipated

¹ Full Mueller Report
<https://interactives.ap.org/the-mueller-report-document/?apnews=true>

receiving information from Russia that could assist candidate Trump's electoral prospects, but the Russian lawyer's presentation did not provide such information."

- "On August 2, 2016, Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort met in New York City with his long-time business associate Konstantin Kilimnik, who the FBI assesses to have ties to Russian intelligence. Kilimnik requested the meeting to deliver in person a peace plan for Ukraine that Manafort acknowledged to the Special Counsel's Office was a "backdoor" way for Russia to control part of eastern Ukraine; both men believed the plan would require candidate Trump's assent to succeed (were he to be elected President). They also discussed the status of the Trump Campaign and Manafort's strategy for winning Democratic votes in Midwestern states. Months before that meeting, Manafort had caused internal polling data to be shared with Kilimnik, and the sharing continued for some period of time after their August meeting."
- **The report states that the investigation found numerous links between individuals with ties to Russia and individuals associated with the Trump Campaign but not enough evidence to support criminal charges.**
 - "While the investigation identified numerous links between individuals with ties to the Russian government and individuals associated with the Trump Campaign, the evidence was not sufficient to support criminal charges. Among other things, the evidence was not sufficient to charge any Campaign official as an unregistered agent of the Russian government or other Russian principal. And our evidence about the June 9, 2016 meeting and WikiLeaks's releases of hacked materials was not sufficient to charge a criminal campaign-finance violation. Further, the evidence

was not sufficient to charge that any member of the Trump Campaign conspired with representatives of the Russian government to interfere in the 2016 election.

- **Obstruction of Justice**
 - Attorney General William Barr said in a news conference prior to the Mueller report's release that the president wasn't involved in obstruction so much as expressing frustration that the investigation was creating a constraint on his presidency.
 - "The president took no act that deprived the special counsel of the documents and witnesses necessary to complete his investigation," Barr said.
- **The 10 episodes Mueller investigated for obstruction of justice**
 - **Conduct involving FBI Director Comey and Michael Flynn**
 - "In mid-January 2017, incoming National Security Advisor Michael Flynn falsely denied to the Vice President, other administration officials, and FBI agents that he had talked to Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak about Russia's response to US sanctions on Russia for its election interference. On January 27, the day after the President was told that Flynn had lied to the Vice President and had made similar statements to the FBI, the President invited FBI Director Comey to a private dinner at the White House and told Comey that he needed loyalty. On February 14, the day after the President requested Flynn's resignation, the President told an outside advisor, "Now that we fired Flynn, the Russia thing is over." the advisor disagreed and said the investigations would continue."
 - "Later that afternoon, the President cleared the Oval Office to have a one-on-one meeting with Comey. Referring to the FBI's investigation of Flynn, the President said, "I hope you can let this go." Shortly after requesting Flynn's resignation and speaking privately to Comey, the

President sought to have Deputy National Security Advisor K.T. McFarland draft an internal letter stating that the President had not directed Flynn to discuss sanctions with Kislyak. McFarland declined because she did not know whether that was true, and a White House Counsel's Office attorney thought that the request would look like a quid pro quo for an ambassadorship she had been offered.

- **The President's reaction to the continuing Russia investigation**

- "In February 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions began to assess whether he has to recuse himself from campaign-related investigations because of his role in the Trump Campaign. In early March, the President told White House Counsel Donald McGahn to stop Sessions from recusing. And after Sessions announced his recusal on March 2, the President expressed anger at the decision and told advisors that he should have an Attorney General who would protect hi,. That weekend, the President took Sessions aside at an event and urged him to "unrecuse." Later in March, Comey publicly disclosed at a congressional hearing that the FBI was investigating "the Russian government's efforts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election," including any links or coordination between the Russian government and the Trump Campaign. In the following days, the President reached out to the Director of the CIA and the NSA to ask them what they could do to publicly dispel the suggestion that the President had any connection to the Russian election-interference effort. The President also twice called Comey directly, notwithstanding guidance from McGahn to avoid direct contacts with the Department of Justice. Comey had previously assured the President that the FBI was not investigating him personally, and the

President asked Comey to "lift the cloud" of the Russia investigation by saying that publicly."

○ **The President's termination of Comey**

- "On May 3, 2017, Comey testified in a congressional hearing, but declined to answer questions about whether the President was personally under investigation. Within days, the President decided to terminate Comey. The President insisted that the termination letter, which was written for public release, state that Comey had informed the President that he was not under investigation. The day of the firing, the White House maintained that Comey's termination resulted from independent recommendations from the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General that Comey should be discharged for mishandling the Hillary Clinton email investigation. But the President had decided to fire Comey before hearing from the Department of Justice. The day after firing Comey, the President told Russian officials that he had "faced great pressure because of Russia," which had been "taken off" by Comey's firing. The next day, the President acknowledged in a television interview that he was going to fire Comey regardless of the Department of Justice's recommendation and that when he "decided to just do it," he was thinking that "this thing with Trump Russia is a made-up story." In response to a question about whether he was angry with Comey about the Russia investigation, the President said, "As far as I'm concerned, I want that thing to be absolutely done properly," adding that firing Comey "might even lengthen out the investigation."

○ **The appointment of a Special Counsel and efforts to remove him.**

- "On May 17, 2017, the Acting Attorney General for the Russia investigation appointed a Special Counsel to conduct the investigation and related

matters. The President reacted to news that a Special Counsel had been appointed by telling advisors that it was "the end of his presidency" and demanding that Sessions resign. Sessions submitted his resignation, but the President ultimately did not accept it. The President told aides that the Special Counsel had conflicts of interest and suggested that the Special Counsel therefore could not serve. The President's advisors told him the asserted conflicts were meritless and had already been considered by the Department of Justice."

- "On June 14, 2017, the media reported that the Special Counsel's Office was investigating whether the President had obstructed justice. Press reports called this "a major turning point" in the investigation: while Comey had told the President he was not under investigation, following Comey's firing, the President now was under investigation. The President reacted to this news with a series of tweets criticizing the Department of Justice and the Special Counsel's investigation. On June 17, 2017, the President called McGahn at home and directed him to call the Acting Attorney General and say that the Special Counsel had conflicts of interest and must be removed. McGahn did not carry out the direction, however, deciding that he would resign rather than trigger what he regarded as a potential Saturday Night Massacre."
- **Efforts to curtail the Special Counsel's investigation**
 - "Two days after directing McGahn to have the Special Counsel removed, the President made another attempt to affect the course of the Russia investigation. On June 19, 2017, the President met one-on-one in the Oval Office with his former campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, a trusted advisor outside the government, and dictated a message for Lewandowski to deliver to

Sessions. The message said that Sessions should publicly announce that, notwithstanding his recusal from the Russia investigation, the investigation was "very unfair" to the President, the President had done nothing wrong, and Sessions planned to meet with the Special Counsel and "let [him] move forward with investigating election meddling for future elections."

Lewandowski said he understood what the President wanted Sessions to do."

- "One month later, in another private meeting with Lewandowski on July 19, 2017, the President asked about the status of his message for Sessions to limit Special Counsel investigation to future election interference. Lewandowski told the President that the message would be delivered soon. Hours after that meeting, the President publicly criticized Sessions in an interview with the New York Times, and then issued a series of tweets making it clear that Sessions's job was in jeopardy. Lewandowski did not want to deliver the President's message personally, so he asked senior White House official Rick Dearborn to deliver it to Sessions. Dearborn was uncomfortable with the task and did not follow through."
- **Efforts to prevent public disclosure of evidence.**
 - "In the summer of 2017, the President learned that media outlets were asking questions about the June 9, 2016 meeting at Trump Tower between senior campaign officials, including Donald Trump Jr., and a Russian lawyer who was said to be offering damaging information about Hillary Clinton as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump." On several occasions, the President directed aides not to publicly disclose the emails setting up the June 9 meeting, suggesting that the emails would not leak and that the number of lawyers with access to them

should be limited. Before the emails became public, the President edited a press statement for Trump Jr. by deleting a line that acknowledged that the meeting was with "an individual who [Trump Jr.] was told might have information helpful to the campaign" and instead said only that the meeting was about adoptions of Russian children. When the press asked questions about the President's involvement in Trump Jr.'s statement, the President's personal lawyer repeatedly denied the President had played any role."

- **Further efforts to have the Attorney General take control of the investigations.**
 - "In early summer 2017, the President called Sessions at home and again asked him to reverse his recusal from the Russia investigation. Sessions did not reverse his recusal. In October 2017, the President met privately with Sessions in the Oval Office and asked him to "take [a] look" at investigating Clinton. In December 2017, shortly after Flynn pleaded guilty pursuant to a cooperation agreement, the President met with Sessions in the Oval Office and suggested, according to notes taken by a senior advisor, that if Sessions unrecused and took back supervision of the Russia investigation, he would be a "hero." The President told Sessions, "I'm not going to do anything or direct you to do anything. I just want to be treated fairly." In response, Sessions volunteered that he had never seen anything "improper" on the campaign and told the President there was a "whole new leadership team" in place. He did not unrecuse."
- **Efforts to have McGahn deny that the President had ordered him to have the Special Counsel removed.**
 - "In early 2018, the press reported that the President had directed McGahn to have the Special

Counsel removed in June 2017 and that McGahn had threatened to resign rather than carry out the order. The President reacted to the news stories by directing White House officials to tell McGahn to dispute the story and create a record stating he had not been ordered to have the Special Counsel removed. McGahn told those officials that the media reports were accurate in stating that the President had directed McGahn to have the Special Counsel removed. The President then met with McGahn in the Oval Office and again pressured him to deny the reports. In the same meeting, the President also asked McGahn why he had told the Special Counsel about the President's efforts to remove the Special Counsel and why McGahn took note of his conversations with the President. McGahn refused to back away from what he remembered happening and perceived the President to be testing his mettle."

○ **Conduct towards Flynn, Manafort, [redacted].**

- "After Flynn withdrew from a joint defense agreement with the President and began cooperating with the government, the President's personal counsel left a message for Flynn's attorneys reminding them of the President's warm feelings towards Flynn, which he said "still remains," and asking for a "heads up" if Flynn knew "information that implicates the President." When Flynn's counsel reiterated that Flynn could no longer share information pursuant to a joint defense agreement, the President's personal counsel said he would make sure that the President knew that Flynn's actions reflected "hostility" towards the President. During Manafort's prosecution and when the jury in his criminal trial was deliberating, the President praised Manafort in public, said that Manafort was being treated unfairly, and declined to rule out a pardon. After Manafort was convicted, the

President called Manafort "a brave man" for refusing to "break" and said that "flipping" "almost ought to be outlawed." [Redacted for Harm to Ongoing Matter]"

- **Conduct involving Michael Cohen**

- The President's conduct towards Michael Cohen, a former Trump Organization executive, changed from praise for Cohen when he falsely minimized the President's involvement in the Trump Tower Moscow project, to castigation of Cohen when he became a cooperating witness. From September 2015 to June 2016, Cohen had pursued the Trump Tower Moscow project on behalf of the Trump Organization and had briefed candidate Trump on the project numerous times, including discussing whether Trump should travel to Russia to advance the deal. In 2017, Cohen provided false testimony to Congress about the project, including stating that he had only briefed Trump on the project three times and never discussed travel to Russia with him, in an effort to adhere to a "party line" that Cohen said was developed to minimize the President's connections to Russia. While preparing for his congressional testimony, Cohen had extensive discussions with the President's personal counsel, who, according to Cohen, said that Cohen should "stay on message" and not contradict the President. After the FBI searched Cohen's home and office in April 2018, the President publicly passed messages of support to him. Cohen also discussed pardons with the President's personal counsel and believed that if he stayed on message he would be taken care of. But after Cohen began cooperating with the government in the summer of 2018, the President publicly criticized him, called him a "rat," and suggested that his family members had committed crimes."

- Based on these ten episodes, the Special Counsel doesn't find that Donald Trump obstructed justice. However, Mueller never confirmed that Trump did not obstruct justice, stating, "If we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the President clearly did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state"
 - Mueller added that Trump's "efforts to influence the investigation were mostly unsuccessful, but that is largely because the persons who surrounded the President declined to carry out orders or accede to his requests."
- Quinta Jurecic, Managing Editor of 'Lawfare' created a heat map with an in depth explanation of the 10 episodes of obstruction of justice outline in the Mueller report. [The full explanation can be found here.](#)

		Obstructive act	Nexus	Intent
Conduct re: Flynn investigation	B	Red	Red	Orange
Conduct re: Comey announcement of Russia investigation	C	Light Blue	Red	Light Blue
Comey firing	D	Orange	Red	Orange
Efforts to fire Mueller	E	Red	Red	Red
Efforts to curtail Mueller	F	Red	Red	Red
Efforts to prevent disclosure of Trump Tower meeting	G	Blue	Blue	Blue
Efforts to have Sessions take over investigation	H	Orange	Orange	Orange
Order to McGahn to deny attempt to fire Mueller	I	Red	Red	Red
Conduct toward Flynn	J	Light Blue	Red	Light Blue
Conduct toward Manafort (cooperation)		Red	Red	Red
Conduct toward Manafort (influencing jury)		Red	Red	Light Blue
Conduct toward redacted individual (Stone?)		White	Red	White
Conduct toward Cohen (influencing testimony)	K	Light Blue	Red	Orange
Conduct toward Cohen (cooperation)		Orange	Red	Orange

- ²There was always a reason the potential episodes of obstruction of justice were inconclusive
 - For example, the report says Trump told then-White House Communications director Hope Hicks and others not to disclose information about the 2016 Trump Tower meeting between top campaign officials and a Russian attorney. But Mueller wrote that “the evidence does not establish” that Trump was specifically trying to prevent Mueller’s team or Congress from obtaining the emails setting up the meeting - which is the only way his actions could have been considered obstruction.
- Congress can still act against Donald Trump on obstruction charges
 - Mueller wrote that Congress “can validly regulate the President’s exercise of official duties to prohibit actions motivated by a corrupt intent to obstruct justice.”
 - Mueller outlines a lengthy constitutional analysis arguing that a congressional move against Donald Trump wouldn’t undermine his executive power outlined under Article II.
- ³Mueller’s team wasn’t happy with Donald Trump’s written responses - and wanted an in-person interview - but ultimately believed their other sourcing was enough.
 - Upon receiving Trump’s written answers in 2018, Mueller’s team notified Trump’s lawyers that they were insufficient, saying:
 - “That the President stated on more than 30 occasions that he ‘does no recall’ or ‘remember’ or have an ‘independent recollection’ of information called for by the questions.”
 - The investigators considered subpoenaing Trump, but ultimately decided that any benefits from an interview would be outweighed by fighting the lengthy lawsuit that would be sure to follow from the president’s lawyers.

² “7 takeaways from the Mueller report” - Axios

<https://www.axios.com/mueller-report-takeaways-ee6cfae3-37e3-429e-b3c5-fcae8994b09d.html>

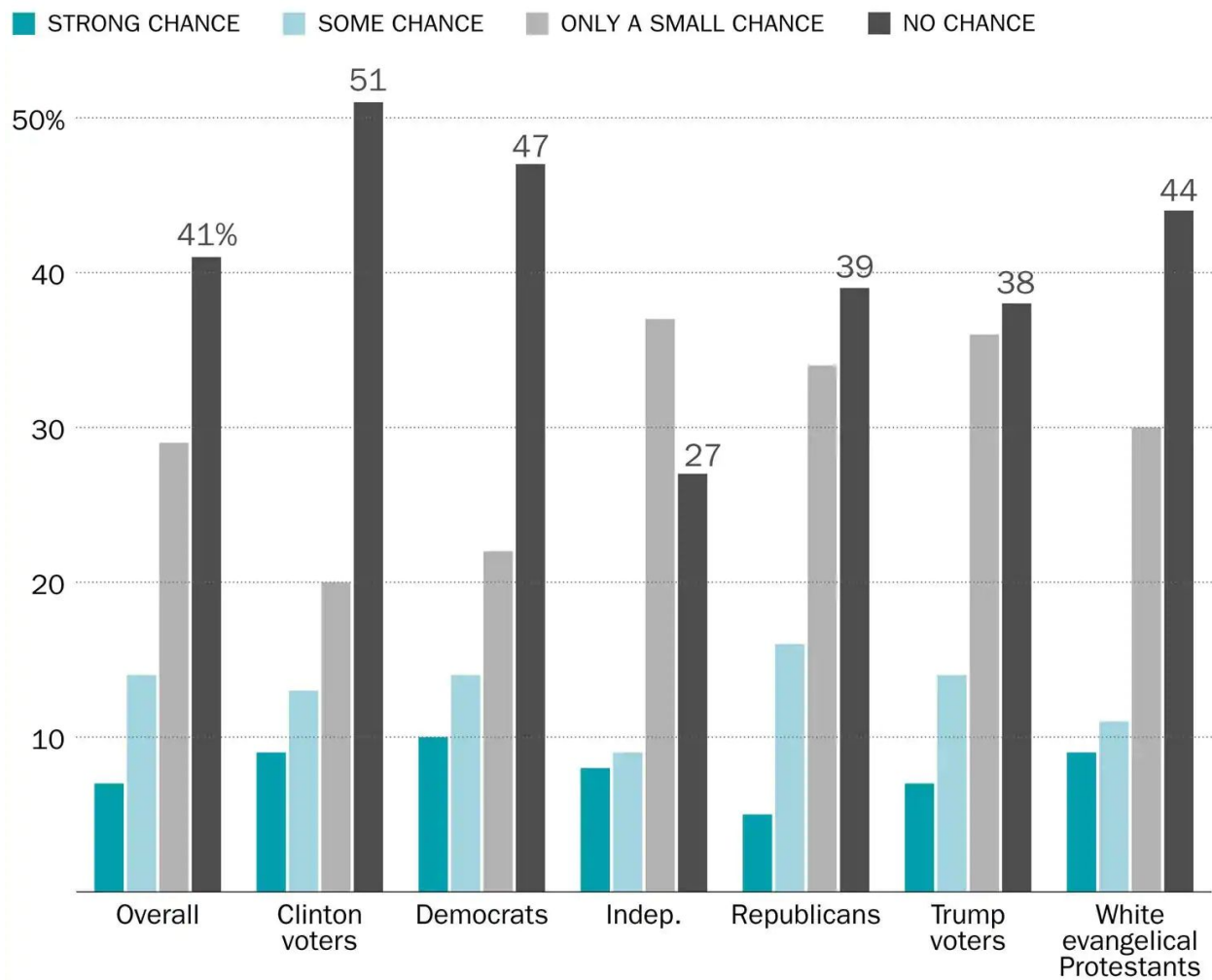
³ “7 takeaways from the Mueller report” - Axios

<https://www.axios.com/mueller-report-takeaways-ee6cfae3-37e3-429e-b3c5-fcae8994b09d.html>

- Mueller wrote that the investigation ultimately:
 - “Determined that the substantial quantity of information we had obtained from other sources allowed us to draw relevant factual conclusions on intent and credibility, which are often inferred from circumstantial evidence and assessed without direct testimony from the subject of the investigation.”
- Here is an interesting graph based on the poll “Chance something in Mueller report would change your mind about Trump”

Chance something in Mueller report would change your mind about Trump

Fox News polling, March 2019.



- The BBC wrote an article titled, [“The stranger parts of the Mueller report you may have missed”](#) which outlined some strange and humorous details about the Trump administration. For example:
 - Mueller disputed fees at a Trump golf course
 - “In the days following the appointment of Special Counsel Robert Mueller to investigate accusations of collusion with Russia, the president aired concerns to his inner circle, including then-Chief Strategist Steve Bannon, that there were conflicts of interest. These included that Mr. Mueller had interviewed for the FBI Director position shortly before his appointment and that he had worked for a law firm that represented people affiliated with the president. However, the third and final concern was more bizarre as Mr. Trump claimed that Mr. Mueller had “disputed certain fees relating to his membership in a Trump golf course in northern Virginia”.
 - Russians paid people to dress like Santa in Trump masks
 - “Mr. Mueller investigated whether Russia’s Internet Research Agency (IRA) was exploiting political divisions in the United States on the request of Mr. Trump. Mr. Mueller writes that he could not “identify evidence that any US persons knowingly or intentionally coordinated” with the IRA. However, there was evidence presented of US rallies organized by the Russian agency involving some colourful tactics.
 - “The IRA also recruited moderators of conservative social media groups to promote IRA-generated content, as well as recruited individuals to perform political acts (such as walking around New York City dressed up as Santa Claus with a Trump mask).”
 - ‘Lawyers don’t take notes’
 - “The report describes Mr. Trump scolding White House counsel Donald McGahn for taking notes in meetings with the special counsel’s office investigators.”

- “The President then asks, ‘What-about these notes? Why do you take notes? Lawyers don’t take notes. I never had a lawyer who took notes.’ McGahn responded that he keeps notes because he is a ‘real lawyer’ and explained that notes create a record and are not a bad thing,” it states”
- “The president is then quoted as saying “I’ve had a lot of great lawyers, like Roy Cohn. He did not take notes.”
- Top legal official always carried a resignation letter
 - “In light of the President’s frequent public attacks, Sessions (Jeff Sessions) prepared another resignation letter and for the rest of the year carried it with him in his pocket every time he went to the White House,” the report says.”