

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: PETER STRZOK

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room 2141, Rayburn

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House Office Building, commencing at 10:05 a.m.

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Mr. Somers. Good morning. This is a transcribed interview of Peter Strzok, the former Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division.

Chairman Goodlatte and Chairman Gowdy requested this interview as part of a joint investigation by the House Judiciary Committee and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to conduct oversight into Department of Justice's investigation of former Secretary Clinton's handling of classified information and related matters.

Would the witness please state his name and position at the FBI for the record?

Mr. Strzok. Peter Strzok, Deputy Assistant Director, Human Resources Division.

Mr. Somers. I want to thank you for appearing here today voluntarily, and we appreciate your willingness to do so.

My name is Zachary Somers, and I am the majority general counsel for the Judiciary Committee.

I will now ask everyone else who is here in the room to introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right with Arthur Baker, who will be leading the questioning for today.

Mr. Baker. Arthur Baker, investigative counsel, House Judiciary Committee majority staff.

Mr. Parmiter. I'm Robert Parmiter, chief counsel for Crime and Terrorism, House Judiciary Committee majority.

Mr. Breitenbach. Ryan Breitenbach, senior counsel, House Judiciary majority.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Congressman John Ratcliffe, representing the Fourth District of Texas.

Mr. Castor. Steve Castor with the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the majority staff.

Mr. Jordan. Jim Jordan, Fourth District of Ohio.

Mr. Don. Ethan Don, FBI OCA.

Mr. Wellons. Paul Wellons, associate general counsel, FBI OGC.

Ms. Besse. Cecelia Besse, acting deputy general counsel, FBI OGC.

Mr. Goelman. Aitan Goelman, attorney for Special Agent Strzok.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Susanne Sachsman Grooms, OGR minority.

Ms. Adamu. Marta Adamu, OGR minority.

Ms. Wasz-Piper. Lyla Wasz-Piper, Judiciary minority.

Mr. Hiller. Aaron Hiller, Judiciary minority.

Ms. Hariharan. Arya Hariharan, OGR minority.

Ms. Kim. Janet Kim, OGR minority.

Ms. Shen. Valerie Shen, Oversight minority.

Mr. Lieu. Ted Lieu, southern California.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Raja Krishnamoorthi, Illinois.

Mr. Dalton. Jason Dalton, FBI congressional affairs.

Chairman Goodlatte. Bob Goodlatte, chairman, House Judiciary.

Ms. Husband. Shelley Husband, Judiciary Committee minority.

Ms. Clarke. Sheria Clarke, Oversight and Government Reform

majority.

Mr. Brebbia. Sean Brebbia, OGR majority.

Mr. Buddharaju. Anudeep Buddharaju, House Oversight majority staff.

Ms. Green. Meghan Green, OGR majority.

Mr. Marino. Congressman Tom Marino, Pennsylvania 10 and member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Johnson. Mike Johnson, Louisiana Four.

Mr. Biggs. Andy Biggs, Arizona.

Mr. Swalwell. Eric Swalwell, California.

Mr. Nadler. Jerry Nadler, ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Deutch. Ted Deutch from Florida.

Mr. Cohen. Steve Cohen from Memphis.

Mr. King. Steve King, Iowa Four, House Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Gohmert. Louie Gohmert, Judiciary Committee, First District of Texas.

Mr. Massie. Thomas Massie, OGR, Kentucky.

Mr. Gaetz. Matt Gaetz, First District of Florida, Judiciary.

Mr. Somers. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure do not apply in this setting, but there are some guidelines that we follow that I'll go over.

Our questioning will proceed in rounds. The majority will ask questions for the first hour, and then the minority will have the opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time if they so

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choose. We will go back and forth in this manner until there are no more questions and the interview is over.

Although a subpoena was issued, as I noted earlier, Mr. Strzok is appearing today voluntarily. Accordingly, we anticipate that our questions will receive complete responses. To the extent that Mr. Strzok declines to answer our questions or if counsel instructs him not to answer, we will consider whether we need to proceed under our subpoena.

Typically, we take a short break at the end of each hour of questioning, but if you would like to take an additional break apart from that, please let us know. We will also take a break for lunch at the appropriate point in time.

As you can see, there is an official reporter taking down everything we say to make a written record, so we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions. Do you understand this?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Somers. So that the reporter can take down a clear record, we will do our best to limit the number of Members and staff directing questions at you during any given hour to just those Members and staff whose turn it is. It is important that we don't talk over one another or interrupt each other if we can help it.

Both committees encourage witnesses who appear for transcribed interviews to freely consult with counsel if they so choose. And you're appearing with counsel today.

Could you please state your name and position for the record, Mr.

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Goelman?

Mr. Goelman. Aitan Goleman, counsel for Special Agent Strzok.

Mr. Somers. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible, so we will take our time. If you have any questions or if you do not understand one of our questions, please just let us know.

If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or if you do not remember, it is best not to guess. Please just give us your best recollection. And it is okay to tell us if you learned the information from someone else. Just indicate how you came to know the information.

If there are things you don't know or can't remember, just say so, and please inform us who, to the best of your knowledge, might be able to provide a more complete answer to the question.

Mr. Strzok, you should also understand that, although this interview is not under oath, you are required by law to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Do you understand that?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Somers. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in an interview. Do you understand this?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Somers. Witnesses who knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or for making false statements. Do you understand this?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Somers. Is there any reason you are unable to provide

truthful answers to today's questions?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Somers. Finally, I would like to note, as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee stated at the outset of our first transcribed interview in this investigation, the content of what we discuss here today is confidential. Chairman Goodlatte and Chairman Gowdy ask that you do not speak about what we discuss in this interview to anyone not present here today to preserve the integrity of our investigation. This confidentiality rule applies to everyone present in the room today.

This is the end of my preamble. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Mr. Goelman. No questions. I just have a few brief comments for the record.

As you indicated, Special Agent Strzok is here voluntarily and of his own free will.

You stated that the committee anticipates that he's going to give complete answers to every question asked. Special Agent Strzok hopes that he can answer every question asked by the committee. He has no intention of invoking his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent.

There are certain questions that he is not going to be able to answer, and I just want to enumerate those categories and explain why.

Any questions that breach a testimonial privilege, like the attorney-client privilege. I understand that the committee purports that these privileges do not apply in the committee testimony. I don't

think that's the law, and I will be instructing Special Agent Strzok not to answer any questions that breach those privileges.

If there are questions to which the answers impinge on FBI equities, Special Agent Strzok will follow the instructions of agency counsel who are here at the table.

If there are questions to which the answers would contain classified information, Special Agent Strzok will be unable to provide that information since Federal law prohibits divulging classified information in an unclassified setting, which my understanding is this is.

Finally, all of Special Agent Strzok's answers here will be truthful and accurate to the best of his recollection. Regrettably, this committee's insistence that Special Agent Strzok testify this week, despite first contacting us last week and despite declining to provide us with a complete list of expected subject areas of questioning, has made it impossible for Special Agent Strzok to prepare as thoroughly as we would have liked -- a dynamic that was exacerbated by Special Agent Strzok's difficulty in accessing some of his FBI materials because of the suspension of his security clearance, which was only restored a couple days ago.

For these reasons, while Special Agent Strzok will answer questions to the best of his recollection sitting here today, some of his answers will not be as precise or fulsome as they would be had the committee not insisted on taking his testimony this week.

Mr. Somers. I would just note for the record -- and then we'll

leave it at that -- that the committee has requested, maybe not of you, but we have requested Mr. Strzok's appearance before the committee for quite some time now. And I would just -- you can have your admonition about it, and I'll have mine.

And I will turn it over now to Mr. Baker to begin the first round of questioning. The time is 10:15.

Mr. Baker. Thank you.

Mr. Swalwell. Can I ask a quick point of order, Mr. Chairman? Why is the witness not under oath?

Chairman Goodlatte. Because it's a voluntary interview.

Mr. Swalwell. But if it's a penalty to lie to Congress anyway, what's the difference? It's just better for the committee if the witness is under oath, isn't it?

Chairman Goodlatte. I'll ask counsel to explain the difference between the two processes, but if he had appeared under subpoena, he would be sworn in under oath and it would be a different process followed.

But I'm going to defer to Mr. Somers.

Mr. Swalwell. I only bring this up because I've heard in the past that when Secretary Clinton was interviewed by the FBI, she wasn't under oath, and that was used as an attack against her. And I just want to make sure that it's clear. Is the witness being offered to go under oath?

Mr. Somers. It is the practice of both committees, OGR and Judiciary, not to swear witnesses for transcribed interviews. We

would if --

Mr. Swalwell. So that's your decision, not the witness's.

Mr. Somers. That's the committees' practice. It's not my decision; it's the practice of --

Mr. Swalwell. But it's not the witness's decision. I just want to make sure.

Mr. Somers. I do not know what the witness's preference is. We did not ask him. That's not the practice of either committee.

Mr. Goelman. Just for the record, the witness is willing to be sworn and willing to testify without being sworn as per the committees' practice.

Mr. Somers. All right. Well, let's go ahead and start this. The time is now 10:15.

Mr. Baker. Okay. Just a quick reminder for folks that are participating from the table: Be cognizant of the microphones when you speak. Either bring them forward or lean forward, just to make sure that what you're saying is heard by the folks that are doing the transcription and for the people that are participating from a place other than the table.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. BAKER:

Q Good morning, Mr. Strzok. Just as a very preliminary matter, what is the correct pronunciation of your name? I've heard it all different ways. I know you said it earlier, but I'd like you to just set the record straight on that.

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A "Struck" is the correct pronunciation.

Q Okay. And you are a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

A Yes.

Q When did you enter on duty with the Bureau?

A I entered on duty with the Bureau in September of 1996.

Q 1996. You are currently at the rank of Deputy Assistant Director. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q And a Deputy Assistant Director in the FBI is a fairly high rank, as I understand it.

A I would call it a midlevel senior executive.

Q Okay. So you are a member of the Senior Executive Service.

A I am.

Q And prior to your current assignment in the Human Resources Division, you were in the Counterintelligence Division?

A Yes.

Q So, in the Counterintelligence Division, as a Deputy Assistant Director, who do you answer to? What is the rank structure in that division?

A So, within the Counterintelligence Division, my boss is Assistant Director, currently held by Bill Priestap. And then Counterintelligence Division is part of the National Security Branch, headed currently by Executive Assistant Director Carl Ghattas.

Q Okay. And who does an Executive Assistant Director report

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to?

A The Deputy Director.

Q So an EAD is fairly high up in the pecking order.

A Yes.

Q The Assistant Director below that is who you answer to.

A That's correct.

Q And then who answers to you? Who is below you in the structure?

A You're asking in the Counterintelligence Division?

Q In Counterintelligence.

Mr. Somers. We can't hear you down at this end of the table. If you could move the mike a little closer to you.

Mr. Strzok. So, within the Counterintelligence Division, there were a variety of section chiefs. I don't know if the organization chart is classified, so let me try and see if I can answer that in way.

Mr. Baker. Just in general.

Mr. Strzok. -- that satisfies your information.

There are a variety of sections, which are headed by Senior Executive Service section chiefs, which address a variety of threats globally from a counterintelligence perspective. Those are both by region as well as by nature of the threat.

So there are three Deputy Assistant Directors within the Counterintelligence Division. My branch at the time had, I believe -- let's see, two, three, four -- five or six section chiefs who handled a variety of both geographic/regional threats as well as

topical threats.

BY MR. BAKER:

Q Okay. Before you were promoted to Deputy Assistant Director, you, yourself, were a section chief.

A That's correct.

Q And what section did you supervise?

A The espionage section.

Q Okay.

Very generally and very succinctly, what does the Counterintelligence Division do? What does a counterintelligence agent do? I mean, in an unclassified -- just for people that might not understand what the difference in those types of investigations are from someone who's maybe working bank robberies.

A Absolutely. So there's a blend of both intelligence-type work and investigations that go on as well as criminal work. The way the Bureau looks at counterintelligence is, broadly, any foreign adversary, any foreign nation who is working to clandestinely work against American interests, whether that is the Government of America, the executive branch, the legislative branch, or into areas of private industry through things like economic espionage.

So the mission of the FBI domestically is to protect America, not only the government but America broadly, against any number of foreign actors -- the Government of China, the Government of Russia, anybody who has a foreign intelligence service working against us.

Q Okay. And part of those investigations, especially in your

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role in the counterespionage section, could some of those investigations involve employees of the Federal Government?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And that would be for espionage?

A Espionage, leaks of information to the media. You know, I could envision, kind of, one-off esoteric scenarios involving economic espionage, but those --

Q Okay.

A -- would be the primary --

Q So the subjects of your investigations are not always just foreign actors. They could be employees that are possibly recruited or of interest by those foreign actors.

A Yes, that's correct.

Q Okay.

What did you do to prepare for your appearance and interview today?

A I reviewed material in the possession of the FBI. I worked with counsel. And, yes, again, reviewing those materials that were online through, you know, things that were released via FOIA or produced to Congress that were made public.

Q Have you met recently, either in preparation for this interview or for any reason, with any FBI employees or former employees that have come before the committee to be interviewed?

A For the purpose of preparation?

Q No. For any reason.

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A Yes.

Q And who was that?

A John Giacalone I met probably 1-1/2, 2 weeks ago for lunch.

Q And what is his role in the FBI?

A He is a retired Executive Assistant Director.

Q Did you report to him at all during the investigation that we're going to pivot to very --

A In a two-layers-removed place, yes.

Q So he was an EAD at the beginning of this investigation that was code name Midyear.

A Yes.

Q And your role at the very beginning was at what rank?

A I was an Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Washington field office when I -- Midyear predicated -- it started before I became involved.

Q Okay.

A lot of the questions we'll ask today -- and I'll just get this out of the way -- you've probably already been asked, you've probably already answered. Some have been reported in the media. But, as you're aware, the Judiciary Committee and the Oversight and Government Reform Committee are conducting their own investigation, and it's prudent for any investigator to give a de novo look at all the evidence. That's why we've requested and reviewed documents. That's why we're bringing witnesses in here and asking some of the questions you've probably already been asked.

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Within the last week or 2 weeks, there was media reporting that you were escorted out of the FBI building and that your security clearances were suspended. Is that correct?

A Yes. I would add, they are reinstated as of this last weekend for the purpose of allowing me to review material in the FBI's possession and appear here today.

Q So they were reinstated for the purpose of today's appearance, not for the purpose of your position at the FBI.

A I do not know the entirety of the reasons they were reinstated. One of the reasons that I am aware of is that they were reinstated so that I could review that material and appear here today.

Q Okay.

You may not know the answer to this, but I'm very curious. You have been -- I mean, at some point -- and we'll get into this later -- you were transferred from the Counterintelligence Division to the Human Resources Division, but you've been in place during the pendency of the various investigations, the various media reporting, significantly, during the Inspector General's investigation. You've been in place and doing Bureau business, different than what you were used to doing, but still on the rolls and in the building doing things.

What has happened recently that the FBI management, executive management, felt there was a need to have you removed from the building?

A So, two answers to that. One, answering it would call for speculation. And the second thing is my understanding of the FBI's personal disciplinary process is one which I'm bound by

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confidentiality, and I can't talk about what I do know.

Q Okay. But you are still an FBI employee.

A I am.

Q Have you been proposed for any discipline, or that's under review?

A Again, I can't get -- my understanding is I can't get into discussion about the particulars of the disciplinary process.

Q But you are currently a paid FBI employee.

A Yes, I am.

Q Okay. So you are not suspended in any way.

A Well, my -- I am suspended from -- I can't -- I'm not able to report for work within the FBI building, but that's a function of what's going on with the security process. But beyond that, I don't think I can comment on the process.

Q Okay. So you're not in the building because your clearances have been suspended, not because you're under any kind of discipline that's already been handed out.

A My understanding is that I cannot go into the building because my clearances are suspended.

Q Okay. And do you have any idea what the duration of the suspension for clearances will be, other than this temporary one?

A I don't.

Q Okay.

Mr. Jordan. Could we have -- we're still having trouble hearing. Can we have the witness, just if you wouldn't mind, Mr. Strzok, just

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really -- no, just pull the mike right up like that. That way, we can hear down here. Thank you.

BY MR. BREITENBACH:

Q You have been informed why you were walked out and why you have lost your security clearance?

A I have been told that my security clearance has been suspended.

Q But have you been given the reasons as to why it was suspended?

A I think getting into the reasons gets into the area of confidentiality that --

Q I understand, but were you told by the Bureau --

A I have been informed within the process and procedures of the FBI disciplinary process those elements that employees are told about. And I'm not -- my understanding is I'm not at liberty to further discuss that.

Q Okay.

BY MR. BAKER:

Q And you've been given no timetable as to how long it would take whoever is reviewing your clearances for a resolution of that matter.

A I have not.

Q And no idea why all of a sudden this became an issue. Because you've been in place, doing essentially FBI function, although in a different division, during the pendency of the various investigations,

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and it hasn't been an issue up until now.

A I'm sorry, what's the -- there are a couple of issue questions in there. What's --

Q Your clearances haven't been an issue during the pendency of the Inspector General's report and the various other reports, but all of a sudden it seems like something happened, that you have been taken out of the building and your clearances revoked, that whatever happened didn't happen during all of this time that the investigations have been going on.

A Right. My understanding is that is part of the Bureau's disciplinary process.

Q Okay.

What was your role -- actually, before we get to that, have you always been a counterintelligence agent? Have you worked other violations, or that has pretty much been your career?

A No, I started as an analyst working domestic terrorism and weapons of mass destruction related to domestic terrorism. As a first office agent, I worked national security matters broadly. That was largely counterintelligence but not exclusively CI. I did some terrorism work as well.

Q On your way from new agent out of Quantico to Deputy Assistant Director, in addition to substantive expertise in terrorism, counterintelligence, I believe you have probably, to get to a DAD rank, you have probably also been required to do various managerial things and to accomplish certain managerial milestones in a career development

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program. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q As part of that, you have had various lower-level supervisory roles, evaluated and promoted to other supervisory roles. Correct?

A Yes.

Q And part of that has been, I am assuming, but correct me, you have done inspections of other field offices, other headquarter entities, other FBI entities.

A Yes.

Q And an inspection involves you going in and taking a step back, looking at and analyzing another office, another FBI entity, another agent's work to make sure it's in compliance with the law, in compliance with administrative guidelines, and ultimately looking to see if the resources, human and monetary resources, put into that investigation are, ultimately, at the end of your inspection, efficient and effective. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q So my point in all of that is, because of you doing all that, you are uniquely qualified as a Deputy Assistant Director to look at an investigation, to run an investigation, to participate in the investigation of an investigation, because you have a really good handle on what an investigation is supposed to look like based on your investigative experience and your managerial experience. You've been trained to evaluate programs. You'll know what a good investigation should look like. Is that correct?

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A I would not say it's unique, but I would say that is true. It is true, I would say, of people who have gone through that path and done those things and arrived at the same position.

Q Okay.

So, as it pertains to the investigation known as Midyear Exam, what was your role in that?

I'm sure it changed, or you can correct me if it didn't, but my understanding with that and any investigation, it's opened up, and then, once people actually start looking at it, it evolves to either what you thought it might evolve to when you first looked at it or maybe something different based on facts and circumstances that you see.

What was your initial role in Midyear Exam?

A My initial role, I was an Assistant Special Agent in Charge at FBI's Washington field office. The case had been opened out of headquarters by then-Assistant Director Coleman. I know Section Chief Sandy Kable was also involved in the effort.

At some point, I would say months in, maybe less than 2 months, but certainly after some time of running, they reached out to the FBI's Washington field office and said they needed greater staffing based on what they were looking at, based on some of the investigative steps that were under consideration, that they wanted to bring in field elements to work on that investigation.

And so that was my first exposure to it and my entry into the investigation.

Q So why would this matter or this case have been opened up

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by FBI headquarters as the office of origin, for lack of a better term, and not opened up at the Washington field office?

A I don't know, because I was not present when it occurred. My understanding is that decision was made by senior executives at the FBI, certainly at and likely above Assistant Director Coleman's level. But I don't know what the reasoning or discussion was as to why that occurred.

Q In the normal course of business, would a case have been opened up at the Washington field office as the office of origin?

A The typical -- I don't know how to define normal for you. The ordinary course of business is that cases are opened up out of field offices and run and supervised there. I am also aware of circumstances where cases are opened and -- or have been opened and run out of FBI headquarters.

Q Okay. So this was not the first time that a case had been opened and run from headquarters.

A That's correct.

Q But, in the normal course of business, it's kind of unusual.

A Again, saying something's normal course of business and then saying something's unusual are, kind of, differences. It is not the typical case, but this was not the first, in my experience.

Q Okay.

How did it come to be that this particular case was classified in the Bureau's classification system as to where the case would land, where it would ultimately be investigated from, how was it that it was

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classified as a counterintelligence matter versus something maybe on the criminal side of the house, a public corruption case or something like that? How did it end up in Counterintelligence?

A I don't know. That was a decision made before and above my level.

Q Would it be that any matter relating to, in very general terms, a spillage of potentially classified information, that is where that particular investigation or any potential criminal violations that went with that, that's just where those matters would be investigated from?

A Well, we don't investigate spills of classified information. That's typically an administrative process is followed. For any potentially criminal matters involving classified information, that is typically within the arena of the Counterintelligence Division.

Q Okay.

BY MR. BREITENBACH:

Q Going back real quickly, you mentioned you were ASAC of WFO when the investigation began.

A That's correct.

Q Who was the Assistant Director in Charge of WFO at the time?

A I believe that was then-Assistant Director Andy McCabe, but I'm not -- I would have to refresh my recollection. I know he was there at some point during that time at WFO, but when I first became aware of it, I'd need to check notes and material.

Q Were you the only agent at the time at WFO that was brought

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over to headquarters to work the case?

A No.

Q Are you aware of how many agents in total were brought over from WFO?

A I am -- I could be aware with a review of materials. Speaking from recollection -- and this is going to be kind of vague -- there was a supervisory special agent, a significant portion of his squad made up of both agents and analysts, augmented by various computer forensic personnel, analytic personnel. So, roughly -- and it varied throughout the course of the investigation, anywhere from 10 to 20 WFO personnel.

But that's a vague recollection, and I wouldn't want to say I'm absolutely certain about that number.

Q So Mr. McCabe, running the office in the Washington field office, would he be aware why individuals were leaving WFO to go to headquarters to run a case?

A My recollection in this case is that he was not. I would defer to my boss, the -- I think it was SAC Greg Cox, I believe -- about any discussions, but I did not have a discussion with Mr. McCabe about what we were doing at headquarters.

Q So you left WFO, went to headquarters. You did not discuss the reasons why you were leaving an office to go to headquarters with Mr. McCabe.

A My recollection is I did not discuss with Mr. McCabe the reasons why the team was going to WFO -- or from WFO to headquarters.

BY MR. BAKER:

Q We've entertained some questions and tried to figure out what the term means that has been associated with this particular investigation, a "special," a "headquarters special." What is that designation as it is assigned to an investigation that the FBI is doing?

A So I think "special" is a term that was used in previous, earlier Bureau times. And that was something where a task force would be created, my recollection is, that there was frequently with a special -- a particular costing and administrative process would be set up so that resources could be tracked and funded as part of supporting that special.

Again, my recollection is that was something that was done much earlier in the FBI and that we don't tend to -- the formal structure of a special is not the same as, you know, kind of, the colloquial use of it.

So I certainly have heard that used. I would say it is more accurate simply to say that it was an investigation where the personnel were at FBI headquarters, they were largely made up of Washington field and FBI headquarters personnel.

Q So, to be clear, it sounds like the term "special," either in an older FBI, and maybe the term has just carried over, it meant how something administratively was done with the case, not the subject matter of the case.

A Both. I mean, typically, I think it was an administrative process, but there was also a recognition that, you know, if there was

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a major terrorist event or if there was a major kidnapping or violent crime or something, where you were creating an investigation that merited a special process, which I can't define to you today. I'm sure if we pulled out an old MAOP or MIOG, documents that haven't existed for 20 years, they might define "special," but it was a not-unprecedented practice to create an entity like that to investigate.

Q So you were recruited for the Midyear Exam investigation? Did they solicit applications? How did you come to be on the team?

A My understanding is that Assistant Director Coleman asked for me and a team to come over. But that is -- that's secondhand information. I don't know that Mr. Coleman ever told me -- I don't know that I know exactly how it came to be that I was selected and directed to go to headquarters.

Q I have heard that you are regarded as the number-one counterintelligence agent in the world. Comment on that?

A That's kind for whoever said it. I believe there are a number of very competent, qualified FBI agents who have spent their careers working counterintelligence, love the work, love protecting America, and I would count myself in that group.

Q So you would be a logical resource for the FBI to go to for a matter that ended up in the Counterintelligence Division.

A Yes.

Q At any time, either yourself or anybody else that came onto the team, was there any assessment, other than your expertise in

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particular violations, was there ever an assessment of political bias or political activity beyond what would just be normal for a rank-and-file employee anywhere, to, you know, go and vote or participate in the process like that?

A Are you asking were political beliefs taken into account in a staffing perspective?

Q Yes.

A No, they were not.

Q Okay.

What was your understanding, in general terms for now, of what the Midyear Exam investigation was about? You're on it now; what's it about?

A My understanding, broadly, was at least, one, whether or not classified information came to be placed on Secretary Clinton's servers and email accounts; if so, how that came to be; and, if so, whether or not that information had been compromised or otherwise accessed by a foreign power.

Q Okay.

We're going to get back to that in a little while. I want to pivot just briefly. This is something that's been widely, widely reported, but I have a question beyond, I think, what the obvious interest in the media has been, and I think you're uniquely qualified to answer that.

It's been widely reported -- the Inspector General's report makes a reference to it, so I'm assuming it's true -- you were involved in

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an extramarital affair at the Bureau.

A Yes.

Q In your role as a counterintelligence expert, is an extramarital affair -- and I mean that in its truest sense, not known by the spouse -- is that a situation, a scenario, that makes the person committing or involved in the affair vulnerable to potential recruitment by a hostile intelligence service?

A Yeah, I don't think I would characterize it that way. I think it is not so much any particular action as it is the way that action might be used to coerce or otherwise get somebody to do something. I can tell you in no way would that extramarital affair have any power in coercing me to do anything other than obeying the law and doing honest, competent investigation.

Q But it would be something that an intelligence service, if they're looking for a vulnerability, if they're looking for someone that is an employee of the U.S. Government doing the sensitive types of investigations that the FBI does -- if there were a recruitment effort or a desire by a hostile service to penetrate that particular government entity, would that be a vulnerability that they would look at and assess to potentially try to exploit?

A I think there are a variety of factors that would be looked at by any government to -- again, the issue is not the particular activity but the way in which those activities or desires might be used to persuade or coerce somebody to work for a foreign intelligence service.

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Q You were never approached by a foreign intelligence service?

A No.

Q Hypothetically, if you were, with the affair pending over you, and that is what the intelligence service brought or assessed to be a vulnerability, how would you respond?

A I would absolutely respond not, you know -- and, well, getting into, you know, terms of art here. One argument is you would tell the service, "Let me get back to you." I would immediately go report that to my superiors and see how they wanted to follow up. But it is -- I absolutely would not have been vulnerable or even let alone consider any sort of recruitment attempt.

Q Okay. Were --

Mr. Ratcliffe. May I jump in?

Mr. Baker. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Agent Strzok, a number of us have other obligations today, so we'll be coming back and forth and may not be able to hear the entirety of your testimony. So I wanted to make sure I get to a couple of things before some Members have to leave.

We'll come back to the Midyear Exam, but, just chronologically, I'm trying to get a picture of the roles that you played throughout all of the investigations that are subject to our jurisdiction that we're asking questions about.

So, in addition to the Midyear Exam, you were involved in an investigation regarding potential Russian interference into our election, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And when did that begin?

Mr. Strzok. It began in late July of 2017.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And was --

Mr. Strzok. I'm sorry, '16.

Mr. Ratcliffe. 2016. And is that the investigation that's referred to by code name Crossfire Hurricane?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I can't get into that in an unclassified setting.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Can you tell us when you first learned about that investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. At the same time it was opened, in late July of 2016.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And what was your initial role with respect to that investigation?

Mr. Strzok. My initial role was as a supervisor over a series of subordinate supervisors and elements who were conducting the investigation. At the time, I was a section chief and was shortly thereafter promoted to Deputy Assistant Director.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. It's been reported that that investigation began on or about July 27th of 2016.

Mr. Strzok. I don't think the specific date has been declassified.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. It has also been reported that you were in charge of leading that investigation. Is that a

fair characterization?

Mr. Strzok. I would say I was among the leadership structure. I was one of the senior leaders. But the investigative structure involved, certainly, subordinate supervisors and subordinate supervisors to them, as well as case agents and analysts. Me, AD Priestap were all involved in a leadership capacity.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Would you have been involved in putting together an investigative plan?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Would you have been in charge or played a role in managing confidential human sources?

Mr. Strzok. Typically that's done at a lower supervisory level.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Typically it is, but --

Mr. Strzok. [REDACTED]

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

So what was your official title with respect to the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. My title was first initially as the Section Chief of the Counterespionage Section and later as the Deputy Assistant Director of Branch 1 of the Counterintelligence Division.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Section Chief, and then became what?

Mr. Strzok. Deputy Assistant Director.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And when did that change take place, and why did it take place?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I was promoted -- I believe it was October of

that year. It might have been September. I would have to check my personnel records.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

Did you open what we would refer to as the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I can't answer that in an unclassified setting.

Mr. Ratcliffe. How long were you on what we're calling the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Well, so, I would correct your use of the word "on." It was an area of which elements were under my subordinate supervisor's supervision for the pendency of my time in Counterintelligence Division and work at the special counsel's office.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So, at some point -- you mentioned special counsel. At what point were you assigned to, or were you assigned to, the special counsel investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I was assigned to the investigation in the -- and, again, I don't have the specific dates, but it was shortly after the establishment of the office. If memory serves, it was the late -- well, I'm sure it was the late spring of 2017, but I don't have a specific date.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah, May 17 of 2017 is the order appointing Special Counsel --

Mr. Strzok. It was after that.

Mr. Ratcliffe. -- Mueller. How soon after?

Mr. Strzok. Again, my recollection is probably within a month, but I am not certain about that. Shortly after the creation, but it

was certainly weeks after the creation.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And were you part of the initial group of folks that were assigned to the special counsel, or were you added to the special counsel probe?

Mr. Strzok. Again, "initial" is a kind of ill-defined word. I was not the first person assigned. I was in the -- I wouldn't be able to tell you sequentially how people were assigned, but I was assigned, I would say, relatively early in the process.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. You mentioned earlier Ms. Page, Lisa Page. Was she assigned before or after you?

Mr. Strzok. I believe she was assigned before.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do you know if her involvement had anything to do with your addition to the special counsel team?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know. I don't believe so.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Who was it that approached you about being appointed to or involved with the special counsel investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I don't remember specifically who. I remember that was a combination of discussions between special counsel staff, the special counsel, and the FBI, but I don't recall who it was who first approached me about that.

Mr. Ratcliffe. At that point in time, was the Russia investigation still active?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Were you still one of the folks leading that investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I was one of the people involved in the leadership structure of that, yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And is it fair for me to say, if you were involved in the leadership structure, that you were involved in taking actions and making decisions regarding the gathering or collecting of evidence or information?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. And I would add to that, sir, that it's -- what's difficult here in an unclassified setting is to explain the structure of things. And so, without getting into any classified territory, I think it would be fair to say that I certainly had a supervisory role but there were a variety of other people who were involved in supervisory roles.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So explain for us how, if at all, the information that was gathered, evidence that was gathered or collected that we've just talked about from the Russia investigation became part of the special counsel investigation.

Mr. Strzok. I don't think I can answer that in an unclassified setting. I can tell you that FBI rules and policies and procedures were followed throughout the conduct of the investigation.

Mr. Swalwell. Mr. Chairman, a point of order. If we can make the room right -- this room is a SCIF -- and go into a classified setting, I'd move that we do that if the testimony is calling for --

Chairman Goodlatte. Rather than going in and out, I would ask you to remember what questions are asked that require a classified setting, and then we can address that further on in the process.

Mr. Ratcliffe. But you can, without getting into the details, you can confirm that evidence or information from the Russia investigation ultimately became part of the special counsel investigation.

Mr. Strzok. I'm concerned both from a classification perspective as well as I defer to Bureau counsel about whether or not we want to get into a discussion about ongoing investigations, and I'm not certain the Bureau wants that.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Again, I'm not getting into the specifics of the information, but I think it's important for everyone to understand the connection, if there is one, between the Russia investigation and the special counsel matter, in which you obviously were involved with both.

Ms. Besse. Congressman, to the extent that he may be, sort of, encroaching on the special counsel territory, I think he's going to be very cautious.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I have no problem with that. Alls I'm asking for is confirmation that the work that was done, whatever that work was done -- he's related decisions were made, actions were taken, evidence was gathered and collected -- that the sum and substance of that, at least in part, transferred over or became part of the consideration of the special counsel.

Ms. Besse. To the extent you know the answer, Pete.

Mr. Strzok. I -- so would you restate the question?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah. I'm just asking you to confirm whether the information or evidence that was gathered and collected as part of the

Russia investigation, where you were making decisions and taking actions, whether any of that became part of the special counsel's probe and consideration.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right.

So, when you became part of the special counsel team sometime in May of 2017, how long did you continue and in what role?

Mr. Strzok. I was there until the beginning of August. I was the -- kind of, essentially the -- one of the lead agents involved in the office.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Lead agents?

Mr. Strzok. In more of a kind of supervisory oversight. There were -- and, again, I don't want to get into specifics of staffing, but my role was at a more senior level than -- I'm pausing because I do not want to talk about --

Mr. Ratcliffe. Let me ask you this.

Mr. Strzok. -- the special counsel's staffing structure.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Were the actions that you were taking and the decisions you were making in the special counsel probe similar to or consistent with the same ones that you had been taking in the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No. I would say they were reduced, in as much as the special counsel and the structure of that office was more one -- it was -- my analogy is, you know, kind of, in the conduct of a criminal investigation, there comes a point where the agent's role lowers and

the attorney's role rises, that the special agent -- or that the special counsel's office and the attorneys were in more of a leadership role of that process.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

The Inspector General report indicates that you were removed from the special counsel investigation team on or about August 27th of 2017. Does that date sound correct?

Mr. Strzok. No. I think it was earlier.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Do you know -- well, tell us the circumstances by which you were removed, to the best of your recollection and understanding.

Mr. Strzok. My recollection is that there was a brief discussion between me, the special counsel, and one of his attorneys, a discussion of his desire and, you know, expression that he thought it would be appropriate for me to return to the FBI.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So a brief conversation with the special counsel and his attorney?

Mr. Strzok. No, not -- one of his -- one of the staff of the special counsel's office.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Who was that?

Mr. Strzok. I would defer to the special counsel to discuss the matters within his administration of that office.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. But when you say the special counsel, you're referring to Robert Mueller.

Mr. Strzok. I am.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So you had a brief conversation with Robert Mueller about your removal from his investigative team.

Mr. Strzok. I did.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. On or about what date?

Mr. Strzok. Again, sir, it is knowable, so if I refresh my recollection with my calendar -- but my recollection is it was in the early August timeframe.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. How long was that brief conversation, to the best of your recollection?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall. Less than 30 minutes, more than -- I don't recall.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. In the less than 30 minutes that you talked with Special Counsel Mueller, did he give you reasons why you were being removed?

Mr. Strzok. We discussed generally the existence of the text messages.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And what do you remember about the conversation as it pertained to the text messages?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection was there was a sense of regret. There was a sense that Special Counsel Mueller absolutely wanted to run an investigation that was not only independent but also presented the appearance of independence, and the concern that these texts might be construed otherwise. And that was the substance of it.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. In that less-than-30-minute conversation with Special Counsel Mueller, did you review any of the individual

texts?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did Special Counsel Mueller or the other lawyer, who you can't recall or that you defer -- did you say you couldn't recall?

Mr. Strzok. Oh, I recall. I defer to the special counsel for discussions of personnel.

Mr. Ratcliffe. There were two, a special counsel and a lawyer from the investigative --

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Did either one of them ask you about any individual or specific texts?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did either one of them ask you whether or not the -- well, first of all, let me just generally -- do you think it's fair, as these texts have been characterized, do you think it's fair to say that there were hateful texts with respect to Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. I wouldn't call them hateful. I would call them an expression of personal belief in an individual conversation with a close associate.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did you have any discussion with Special Counsel Mueller or the other attorney about whether or not those text messages reflected bias or prejudice against Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did Special Counsel Mueller or the other attorney

in the room ask you whether or not your expression of personal belief about Donald Trump influenced any of the actions or decisions that you had taken or any of the evidence or information that you had gathered?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. In looking at the specific texts, on August 6th of 2016, one of the texts that you sent to Ms. Page, you said, "F Trump." Do you recall that?

Mr. Strzok. I recall reading that. I don't recall specifically sending that. But I've read it, yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do you have any reason to doubt the veracity of that text?

Mr. Strzok. I do not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

So did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone with the special counsel investigative team make any inquiry as to whether or not any bias or prejudice reflected in that text that I just referred to impacted any actions or decisions or the manner in which the evidence you gathered, that information was affected?

Mr. Strzok. So, if you're asking whether or not any -- if any of my personal beliefs ever influenced any --

Mr. Ratcliffe. No, I'm asking you --

Mr. Strzok. -- official action, the answer to that is never.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I'm not asking that question. I'm asking you whether the special counsel or anyone with the special counsel's investigative team made inquiry to you whether or not any bias or

prejudice that would be reflected in the text "F Trump" impacted any actions that you took, any decisions you made, any information or evidence that you gathered.

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right.

That very same day, you sent a text message to Ms. Page saying that you can protect the country at many levels. Do you recall that?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I think that is -- chronologically, I think that was earlier than the August 2017 timeframe.

Mr. Ratcliffe. No, it was August -- do you all have a copy of the text messages? I can provide --

Mr. Strzok. Right, but I believe that's a full year prior, sir, not 2017.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Oh, okay. Yeah. August 6th of 2016, you sent a text message that said, I can protect the country at many levels.

Mr. Strzok. That was a -- that is part of a larger text, yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone with the special counsel investigative team make any inquiry to you as to what you meant by that?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did they make any inquiry as to whether or not, when you said I can protect the country at many levels, that reflected any bias or prejudice against Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. Did they ask?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yes.

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone on the investigative team ask you whether or not what you stated in that text message in any way impacted the actions or decisions that you took or the manner in which you collected evidence or information?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. On August 8th of 2016, in response to a text message from Lisa Page making inquiry as to whether or not Donald Trump would become President, you responded, "No. No, he's not. We'll stop it." Correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone with the special counsel investigative team make any inquiry as to whether or not what is reflected in that text impacted your actions or decisions or the manner in which you collected evidence either as part of the Russia investigation or during your involvement with the special counsel team?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. On August 15th of 2016, you sent a text message to Ms. Page saying, "I want to believe the path that you set forth in Andy's office but feel we can't take that risk." Do you remember saying that?

Mr. Strzok. I remember reading the text and having that refresh my memory.

Mr. Ratcliffe. You don't have any reason to doubt the veracity

of that text.

Mr. Strzok. No, I do not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And is the risk that you were talking about the risk of a Trump Presidency?

Mr. Strzok. It is not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. What was the risk that was reflected in that?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection of that discussion was that we had received information from a very sensitive source alleging collusion between the Government of Russia and members of the Trump campaign.

As is frequently the case in counterintelligence investigations and any national security investigations, there's a tension between the protection of a sensitive source and method and pursuing the investigation related to that information.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

Mr. Strzok. There was a debate -- if I may, sir, finish, because it's important to understanding the context of what I said.

The debate was how aggressively to pursue investigation, given that aggressive pursuit might put that intelligence source at risk. And there were some who looked and said, well, the polls are overwhelmingly in Secretary Clinton's favor; we can not risk this source by just not really investigating that aggressively.

And my perspective was, you know, we need to do our job. We're the FBI. We need to investigate. The country deserves this. If there is a problem within the membership of the Trump campaign, that, if they are elected, that those people might be named to senior national

security positions, and that is something, certainly, that the American people deserve and, indeed, candidate Trump might want to know.

So my use of the phrase "insurance policy" was simply to say, while the polls or people might think it is less likely that then-candidate Trump would be elected, that should not influence -- that should not get in the way of us doing our job responsibly to protect the national security.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So who was the source of that information, and when did you receive it?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I can't get into that in an open setting.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, you were asked about this text message by the Inspector General, correct?

Mr. Strzok. I was.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And the Inspector General also asked you whether or not it was reasonable for people to assume that the risk that you were talking about was Donald Trump, based in light -- or based upon other messages, text messages, that you sent about Donald Trump, correct?

Mr. Strzok. I don't remember the exact -- I don't remember the phrasing and questions from the Inspector General.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do you remember telling the Inspector General that you thought it would be reasonable for people to have that assumption based on the other text messages that you sent about Mr. Trump?

Mr. Strzok. I absolutely, whatever is recorded in his report and

my transcript, would agree with, but I would say that there are a variety of interpretations. What I'm telling you, because I wrote it, it means we need to err on the side of aggressively investigating this and not just, you know --

Mr. Ratcliffe. I understand that, but I'm asking you, do you think it's reasonable for other people to have a different interpretation of what you meant by that when they read it in context with other text messages?

Mr. Strzok. I think it's reasonable that people would have any number of interpretations of things.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And what you're telling us, though, is that Robert Mueller didn't make inquiry into either of those, yours or anyone else's interpretation.

Mr. Strzok. I don't know what he did or didn't do. I can only speak to what he talked or asked me.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Right. Well, you're the only one that would be able to give that interpretation, right?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I don't know who he might have, between the IG or anybody else, who he might have spoken to. I can tell you, with regard to me, he did not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Right. So he didn't even make inquiry.

Mr. Strzok. With me, he did not ask.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right.

When you joined the special counsel investigative team, shortly before you did, you sent a text message to Lisa Page where you talked

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about unfinished business and the need to fix it and finish it.

Did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone on the special counsel investigative team make any inquiry to you as to whether or not that text message related to Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did it relate to Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, in my recollection, that referred to a much broader effort of the Government of Russia to interfere with our Presidential election. I saw that, from our observation, from information from the U.S. intelligence community that has since been declassified, that the Government of Russia, in social media and other places, were making use of the Clinton investigation in a way to disrupt our election.

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[11:05 a.m.]

Mr. Strzok. I was concerned in that context that the work that we had done that was professional and extraordinary and complete was being twisted and turned in a way by a foreign adversary to undermine our electoral process.

And so, as I looked at that going on, as I looked at my background on the Midyear case and my career's work against hostile foreign powers, I wanted to -- my sense was I wanted to continue the work of making sure that, in fact, the Government of Russia would not be successful in interfering with our election, that they would not be successful in using the investigative results of the FBI with regard to the Clinton server.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, I know a lot of Members are going to have questions regarding what you meant by that, but, again, to be clear, Special Counsel Mueller and no one on his investigative team just heard the explanation that you gave for what that text message meant because they didn't ask about it, right?

Mr. Strzok. That's a two-part question. They did not ask about it of me; I don't know what they heard.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. That same day, you talked about an investigation leading to impeachment. Are we talking about impeachment of Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. I don't -- yes. I don't know if it was the same day, but I defer to your notes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I'll represent to you that it's a text message

dated May 18 of 2017. Did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone on the special counsel investigative team make an inquiry to you as to whether or not your reference to impeachment related to Donald Trump?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did they make any inquiry as to whether or not the text message that you spent -- that you sent talking about the impeachment of Donald Trump in any way impacted the actions or decisions that you took or the manner in which you had gathered evidence, either in the Russia investigation or as part of Robert Mueller's special counsel team?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. On that same day, May 18, 2017, in the text message to Ms. Page, you talked about whether or not to join the special counsel investigative team and said, "If I thought it was likely" -- let me read it to you exactly because I don't want to paraphrase.

You said: You and I both know the odds are nothing. If I thought it was likely, I'd be there, no question. I hesitate in part because of my gut sense and concern there's no big "there" there.

Do you remember sending that text message?

Mr. Strzok. I don't remember sending it, but I have -- I believe it to be true and my words.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. The odds are nothing about what?

Mr. Strzok. So my recollection, my thought at the time was we had a credible allegation that the Government of Russia had offered assistance to elements and members of the Trump team to -- in the

election.

Our look, which was still ongoing and, I believe to be still ongoing, it was not clear to me based on the investigators' skepticism whether we didn't know what we had, whether this was a large coordinated activity, whether this was a group of people pursuing their own agendas or, you know, their own motivations or desires and not knowing at that point whether or not -- what that interaction might have been or what it was.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So you said --

Mr. Meadows. Can I ask one clarification?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah, you can.

Mr. Meadows. You indicated that there was evidence. There was evidence that Russia was trying to do it. There was no evidence the other way around. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, the --

Mr. Meadows. I want you to be clear in -- that Russia was trying.

Mr. Strzok. I understand your question, and I can't answer with a specificity that you would like in an unclassified setting.

Mr. Meadows. Well, you just answered with specificity the other way. So I guess what I'm saying is, based on what I know, I want to give you a chance to clarify the record.

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely, sir. And what I would tell you is, my statements -- my recollection just now is that I was talking about the initial allegations that we had received that have been talked about and described.

Mr. Meadows. That Russia was trying to interfere?

Mr. Strzok. Right. And what I don't want to do, though, is to extrapolate into our -- your second question, which is whether or not there was any reciprocity because there's a difference between the sum and substance of the initial --

Mr. Meadows. But you were extrapolating based on your answer, so -- and, again, I'm just trying to get clarification.

Mr. Goelman. Yeah. If you'd like clarification, I'd ask the Congressman to allow the witness to finish his answer.

Mr. Strzok. So, sir, I would -- as to the second question as to whether or not there was information about whether elements of the Trump campaign were themselves engaging in that, I can't answer that in an unclassified setting, and furthermore, I don't think the FBI or special counsel would want me commenting on ongoing investigations.

Mr. Ratcliffe. You said in response to the question that I asked that you -- you said: We didn't know what we had.

That was after 9 months of your involvement in the Russia investigation, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yeah. I -- I'm going to take your representation that it's 9 months, but yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

Mr. Strzok. I don't -- anyway, but it was after -- it was after the initiation of the Russia investigation.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So you went on to say that you were concerned that there's no big "there" there. What did that mean?

Mr. Strzok. What I just said, that I think at that point, at the early stage of the investigation, there were a variety of things going on, and it was not clear to me what that represented, whether it was the activities of a group of individuals or something larger or more coordinated or, in fact, nothing at all, which is frequently the case in early stages of the investigation. I think it was less than 9 months, sir, but I defer to the record.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. But you didn't say, "I'm not sure there's no big 'there' there"; you said, "I'm concerned there's no big 'there' there."

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. "Concern" is worry.

Mr. Strzok. "Concern," I think, I would take a different context of that. "Concern" is in regard to what my choice of whether or not I wanted to stay as a Deputy Assistant Director in the Counterintelligence Division, whether I wanted to go and work for the special counsel, which of those were a -- did a -- provided more of an opportunity for me to protect the Nation. And so "concern" is not -- I would not use "concern" in the way that you're inferring.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

Mr. Strzok. I understand it's my word, but I'm telling you that's not what I meant --

Mr. Ratcliffe. Right. It's your word, and do you think it's an unreasonable interpretation, in the context of the other text messages that you sent about Donald Trump, that folks might think that you were

rooting against him?

Mr. Strzok. No, I don't think in the context of that conversation or that text that it is -- I think it's very reasonable to believe the truth, which is that I was not sure whether or not I should go to special counsel or remain at the FBI.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So what did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone on his investigative team ask you about what you meant when you said that?

Mr. Strzok. They did not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Made no inquiry as to whether or not the bias or prejudice against Donald Trump that may be reflected in that in any way impacted the decisions that you made, the actions that you took, or the evidence that you gathered as part of the Russia investigation or as part of his special counsel investigative team?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I'd push back on your characterization that that reflected bias. I don't believe that's the case at all. But in answer to your question of whether or not they asked me about it, they did not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Fair enough.

Four days later, on May 22, you sent Ms. Page, in response to her sending you a Washington Post article, your response was: God, I suddenly want on this. You know why.

Tell us what you meant when you said that.

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall sitting here now what I meant. My inference looking at that was that it was based on some investigative

event that happened, but I don't recall what it was.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Did it have anything to do with wanting on it so that -- because you thought it might lead to Donald Trump being impeached?

Mr. Strzok. No, not at all. My desire has always been kind of cases that are interesting, cases that are important to national security. It has nothing to do with the individual or the party of the individual. It is driven by my -- my career has been driven by where I can best protect the national security of the United States.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So did Bob Mueller ask you if that's what you meant by that?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Anyone on his investigative team?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So just to -- because our time is about expired here for this first hour, is it fair to say that, again, to recap, about these text messages that Special Counsel Mueller and/or anyone on Special Mueller -- Special Counsel Mueller's investigative team never made inquiry as to whether these text messages reflected bias or prejudice against Donald Trump or asked you whether or not they impacted the actions or decisions that you took or the information that you gathered in the Russia investigation or as part of the special counsel probe?

Mr. Strzok. So your first question, I don't know who they did or did not ask. I can tell you in answer to your second question, they

did not ask me.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And did Special Counsel Mueller or anyone on the Special Counsel Mueller's investigative team ever ask you whether any hatred or any, as you characterize it, expression of personal belief about Donald Trump ever impacted any of the actions or decisions you took or any of the evidence or information you collected?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I think our time has expired.

Mr. Breitenbach. We will take a 5-minute break and come back on with the minority.

[Recess.]

[11:30 a.m.]

Ms. Kim. We will now go back on the record. The time is 11:30.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. KIM:

Q Mr. Strzok, thank you for being here today. My name is Janet Kim. I'm a counsel with Ranking Member Elijah Cummings of the House Oversight Committee. I will be asking you some questions, and we also have many Members here who are interested in speaking with you today.

I'd like to go back to something -- a dialogue that you were having with Mr. Ratcliffe about your performance on Mr. Mueller's investigation. So, in your conversation where Special Counsel Mueller and you agreed that it was time for you to go back to the FBI, was there a mutual understanding between the two of you that you, Mr. Strzok, did not believe that your personal, political views expressed in those text messages impacted your work in any way?

A I can't speak to whether or not it was mutual. I certainly believe and know that my personal beliefs never impacted any action that I took as an FBI agent.

Q Have your personal political views ever affected any action you've taken?

A They have not.

Q Thank you.

Mr. Nadler, I think -- if you're ready.

Mr. Nadler. I am. Thank you.

Mr. Strzok, in March 2017, Director Comey disclosed in public

testimony that the FBI had begun investigation into, quote, "the Russian Government's efforts to interfere in the 2016 Presidential election," close quote, including, quote, "the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian Government and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia's efforts," close quote.

We now know the investigation began before the election in July of 2016. But no news of that investigation regarding President Trump's campaign leaked out to the press. Were you aware of this investigation before the election?

Mr. Strzok. I was.

Mr. Nadler. Was Lisa Page?

Mr. Strzok. She was.

Mr. Nadler. Andrew McCabe?

Mr. Strzok. He was?

Mr. Nadler. James Comey?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Nadler. Approximately how many FBI officials were aware of this investigation before the election?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I would -- I would estimate between 15 to 30.

But that's an estimate.

Mr. Nadler. Okay. That's fine. Are you aware of any FBI officials leaking information about this investigation before the election?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Did you make any disclosures about this investigation to the press or the public before election day?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. That would have been improper. We don't talk about pending investigations. We don't talk about investigations.

Mr. Nadler. How do you think a disclosure to the press or to the public would have impacted Donald Trump's electoral prospects?

Mr. Strzok. I think it would have had an adverse impact on his electoral chances.

Mr. Nadler. If someone at the FBI was trying to stop Donald Trump from being elected President, do you think they would have publicly disclosed that his campaign was under investigation for potentially colluding with Russian Government actors?

Mr. Strzok. That might be one way they would seek to impact it.

Mr. Nadler. But to your knowledge, no one at the FBI did disclose this fact publicly, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Correct.

Mr. Nadler. Would you consider this strong evidence that there was not a deep state conspiracy at the FBI to stop Donald Trump from being elected?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I can both tell you that it would be strong evidence and, in fact, there was no conspiracy to stop candidate Trump from being President.

Mr. Nadler. And this would be strong evidence of that

proposition?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Nadler. And was this also strong evidence that you personally were not trying to stop Donald Trump from being elected President?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Nadler. Why didn't the FBI disclose the existence of this investigation before election day?

Mr. Strzok. It was a pending counterintelligence matter, both because we don't talk about pending investigations generally and, specifically, those that relate to counterintelligence matters, we don't discuss them.

Mr. Nadler. Do you recall the specific discussion about whether or not to publicly disclose the existence of the Trump investigation before the 2016 election?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall one. I recall a variety of discussions about how to potentially publicly address the various efforts that the Government of Russia was making to interfere with the election.

Mr. Nadler. But not a discussion of revealing the investigation of possible collusion with the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. There was a discussion or series of discussions, to my recollection, about how to appropriately and aggressively investigate them and what that path might look like, but not specifically to publicly disclose them.

Mr. Nadler. Okay. Do you recall when Director Comey made the decision to disclose the existence of the investigation into the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know specifically when he decided. But there were discussions with Mr. Comey and his senior staff that I participated in, and I'm sure others that I didn't, about whether or not to do that as part of the appearance before Congress in making that known to Congress, but I don't know when that occurred.

Mr. Nadler. Now, Mr. McCabe's deposition to us states as follows, quote: Well, I think eventually we had that discussion because eventually we made that decision, and the Director sought and received the Department's authorization to make that investigation public in March of 2017, close quote.

Do you know why Director Comey made the decision to disclose this in March 2017?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know why.

Mr. Nadler. Or what events occurred that led to that specific timing?

Mr. Strzok. That timing, I think, was in the context of the broad efforts that were going on with regard to the Government of Russia's intrusion into our election process. I don't recall sitting here what it was that specifically precipitated that decision in the March timeframe.

Mr. Nadler. Okay. March 2017 timeframe?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Nadler. Now, Mr. Strzok, there have been many public criticisms coming from all sides against former FBI Director James Comey and the decisions that he made in the handling of the Clinton investigation. However, the President and other Republicans have gone well beyond that and have made extremely serious allegations that attack Director Comey's fundamental honesty and integrity or even accuse him of committing crimes. I'd like to go through some of them with you now to see if you can shed some light.

Last week, after the inspector general released its report on the FBI's handling of the Clinton email investigation, the President's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani went on FOX News and stated, quote: Peter Strzok was running the Hillary information. That's a total fix. That's a closed book now, total fix. Comey should go to jail for that and Strzok. Let's investigate the investigators. Let's take a halt to the Mueller investigation, unquote.

First, just to be clear, was the Hillary Clinton email investigation a total fix?

Mr. Strzok. Not at all.

Mr. Nadler. Do you believe Director Comey should, quote, "go to jail for that"?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Do you believe you should go to jail for that?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Has the inspector general accused you of any criminal behavior?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Has anything Director Comey said or done indicate there should be a halt to the Mueller investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. After the inspector general's report President Trump also stated, quote: I think Comey was the ring leader of this whole, you know, den of thieves. They were plotting against my election, close quote.

Was Director Comey a ring leader of a den of thieves who was plotting against Donald Trump during the election?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Do you have any reason to believe Director Comey was plotting against Donald Trump during the election?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. On April 13th of this year, 2018, President Trump also tweeted, quote: James Comey's a proven leaker and liar. Virtually everyone in Washington thought he should be fired for the terrible job he did until he was, in fact, fired. He leaked classified information for which he should be prosecuted. He lied to Congress under oath, close quote.

Do you believe Director Comey's a proven liar?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. My experience and information I have, I have not seen any statement that he's made that was untrue.

Mr. Nadler. Are you aware of Director Comey ever lying to Congress under oath?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Has Director Comey ever lied to you?

Mr. Strzok. No, not to my knowledge.

Mr. Nadler. Are you aware of any instances of Director Comey lying?

Mr. Strzok. I'm not.

Mr. Nadler. Mr. Strzok, are you familiar with Director Comey's testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on June 8th, 2017?

Mr. Strzok. Generally, yes.

Mr. Nadler. Okay.

Mr. Strzok. And, sir, I'd say, there were a variety of testimonial settings where Director Comey was coming to the Hill between the Intel, the Gang of Eight, and others, so they all kind of blur together at this time.

Mr. Nadler. It's okay.

Did you generally find that Director Comey's descriptions of events in his written and oral testimony were consistent with the contemporaneous descriptions that he shared with you at the time of those events?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Nadler. Do you believe that Director Comey accurately shared with the Senate Intelligence Committee his memory of his interactions

with President Trump to the best of his recollection?

Mr. Strzok. As I understand that testimony, yes.

Mr. Nadler. Did you find that Director Comey's descriptions of his meetings with President Trump were consistent with the descriptions he shared with you immediately after his meetings with President Trump?

Mr. Strzok. Again, to the extent I was aware of any of those interactions, yes.

Mr. Nadler. Overall, do you have any reason to doubt the accuracy of Director Comey's oral or written testimony or representation of the facts from when he was the FBI Director?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Mr. Strzok, I have attended every interview in this investigation. Actually, I'm not sure that's -- let me take that back.

Let me just say, your opinion, as far as I know, is consistent with that of every FBI employee who has come before you. Director Comey is an honest person, and there's no reason that he should not be a credible witness for the special counsel. That's correct, is it not?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, it is.

Mr. Nadler. Thank you on that.

Now, when did you join the special counsel's probe?

Mr. Strzok. Again, it was -- my recollection is that it was the late spring, early summer of 2017.

Mr. Nadler. And what were your responsibilities on the special counsel's team?

Mr. Strzok. I was the lead agent, and that's not to say case agent or investigator but kind of putting together the FBI's structure within that office.

Mr. Nadler. And when did you first learn that the IG's office was examining your texts with Lisa Page?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection is that it was sometime between late July or early August of that year.

Mr. Nadler. And when were you removed from Special Counsel Mueller's probe?

Mr. Strzok. Shortly thereafter.

Mr. Nadler. So far, Special Counsel Mueller's probe has resulted in 18 indictments against 20 individuals and 3 companies, cataloging 75 criminal acts. Five different individuals have so far pled guilty. Were you involved in the prosecutorial decisions that resulted in these indictments and guilty pleas?

Mr. Strzok. I would defer to the special counsel's office to talk about the process that they went through with prosecution decisions. Generally, prosecution decisions are made by the prosecutors, but I don't want to comment on the process that Special Counsel Mueller did or didn't use. I defer to them to describe that.

Mr. Nadler. Okay. And what would you say to those who allege that the special counsel's probe has become irredeemably tainted because you and Lisa Page were once a part of the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I'd say that is utterly nonsense.

Mr. Nadler. Because?

Mr. Strzok. Because, first of all, I never, ever considered or let alone did any act which was based on any personal belief. My actions were always guided by the pursuit of the truth, and moreover, anything I did was done in the context of a much broader organization. It was done with other agents, with agents and analysts below me, with agents and analysts above me, with the rules and regulations that govern everything we do in the FBI.

And so I think when you look at the totality of what occurred, the procedures that were followed, demonstrably followed and followed in accordance with law and our procedures, they were complete. They were thorough. They were absolutely done with no motive other than a pursuit of the truth.

And I think the fact that you, as you noted, without getting into any details about what the special counsel is or isn't doing, simply the public record of the charges and guilty pleas speak for themselves.

Mr. Nadler. Thank you very much. I'll now hand over the questioning to Congressman Krishnamoorthi.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Good morning.

Mr. Strzok. Good morning, sir.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Thank you so much.

Mr. Strzok, as you -- as I am sure you're aware, there has been a litany of attacks from the highest levels of government accusing the FBI and DOJ of conducting investigations driven by political bias instead of just facts and the rule of law. The question is this: Are you aware of any FBI or DOJ investigations motivated by political bias?

Mr. Strzok. I'm not.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. That's not who we are. That is not -- my decades of FBI experience, we are driven by a pursuit of the truth. Just as I would never allow any personal opinion or belief to drive an action, I wouldn't tolerate it in others, and that is a -- the code of the Bureau. And what distresses me the most are people's suggestion that the FBI is the sort of place where that even could possibly occur is destructive to the rule of law and the mission of the FBI to protect the United States.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. On February 2nd, 2018, President Trump tweeted, quote: The top leadership and investigators of the FBI and Justice Department have politicized the sacred investigative process in favor of Democrats and against Republicans, something which would have been unthinkable just a short time ago. Rank and file are great people, exclamation point.

The question is this: Do you agree that the top leadership and investigators of the FBI and the Justice Department have politicized the sacred investigative process in favor of Democrats and against Republicans?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Throughout your career at the FBI, are you aware of any instances of the FBI conducting investigations in favor of Democrats and against Republicans?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Are any investigations staffed based on whether you're a Democrat or Republican?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Are you aware of any actions ever taken to damage the Trump campaign at the highest levels of the Department of Justice or the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Are you aware of any actions ever taken to personally target Mr. Trump at the highest levels of the Department of Justice or the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. By the way, how many people were on the Hillary Clinton investigation?

Mr. Strzok. It varied. I would say it would range between 20 to 30 at a minimum and 60 to 70 at the highest point.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Thank you.

Is there any evidence that the FBI or DOJ had any officials that took any actions biased in favor of Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Is there any evidence that President Obama ordered any investigative activity that was biased in favor of Clinton or, alternatively, biased against President Trump?

Mr. Strzok. To my knowledge, no.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Is there any evidence that President Obama ordered a wiretap of Donald Trump or the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. To my knowledge, no.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I've been troubled by escalating attacks against the DOJ and the FBI, attacks against the independence of the institutions, the integrity of their employees, and the legitimacy of the DOJ's and FBI's investigations. I want to ask you about some of these statements and get your personal reaction.

On December 3, 2017, the President tweeted, quote: After years of Comey, with the phony and dishonest Clinton investigation -- and more -- running the FBI, its reputation is in tatters. Worst in history, exclamation point. But fear not; we will bring it back to greatness.

Question: Do you agree with the President's statement that the FBI's reputation is in, quote/unquote, "tatters" and is in -- and it is the, quote/unquote, "worst in history"?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Do you agree with the President's characterization that the Clinton investigation was, quote, "phony and dishonest," closed quote?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. In your opinion, what kind of impact does statements like these have on the morale of rank-and-file FBI agents?

Mr. Strzok. I think they are terribly destructive. I think the FBI is an extraordinarily competent, proud, and vital part of the protection of the rule of law in this country, and I think those are harmful statements.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. When you say "they're terribly destructive," what do you mean? How does that impact your work?

Mr. Strzok. I think it has a variety of impacts. I think, certainly, the impact on public faith and confidence of the FBI and its ability to do its job; I think an impact on the morale of the men and women of the FBI who are doing extraordinary work, as they always have done.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Now, I know that the FBI is going to continue to do its job and the men and women of the FBI will continue to do their jobs. But did you personally see morale erode as the President made such tweets?

Mr. Strzok. I think it is fair to say that the politicized situation in which we find ourselves has been very difficult amongst the men and women of the FBI.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. At the White House press briefing, the day after Director Comey was fired, Sarah Huckabee Sanders stated that the termination happened because, and I quote: Most importantly, the rank and file of the FBI had lost confidence in their Director.

This is the question: Looking back on the lead-up to Director Comey's dismissal, do you agree with Ms. Sanders that the rank and file of the FBI had lost confidence in Director Comey?

Mr. Strzok. I do not.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. What was your reaction when you learned that Director Comey was fired?

Mr. Strzok. I was stunned. I found it hard to believe that

something like that would happen, and particularly in the graceless way that it happened was shocking to me.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. What do you mean "graceless way"? Can you explain?

Mr. Strzok. My understanding from media reports is that he learned about it from a news feed while he was in Los Angeles field office, and I -- regardless of belief or opinion of anybody, that a career public servant would be treated in that way was stunning to me.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. What was the reaction of FBI agents with whom you spoke regarding the firing of Director Comey?

Mr. Strzok. I believe the consensus of the people that I spoke with and was aware of is that people were surprised and stunned.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. On that same day, President Trump tweeted, quote: James Comey will be replaced by someone who will do a far better job bringing back the spirit and prestige of the FBI.

Question is this: Did you agree with the President's assertion that there was some problem with the spirit and prestige of the FBI under Director Comey?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. Because my experience throughout my career at the FBI to this day is that the spirit and the prestige of the FBI is strong, that the men and women of the FBI believe in their mission, are extraordinarily competent, and people of character and integrity, and that that did not and has not wavered.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. And how long have you been at the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. I've been at the FBI for just under 22 years.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Following the inspector general's report, President Trump has stated, and I quote: I think Comey was the ring leader of this whole, you know, den of thieves. They were plotting against my election.

Question: Do you have any reason to believe the FBI is a, quote, "den of thieves," closed quote?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. Because it's not. Again, the men and women of the FBI have sworn an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. My experience is that is not -- that is something that they live every day, and it is a hall of honor, not at all the opposite of some sort of den of thieves.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Did you personally witness anyone at the FBI attempting to plot against Donald Trump's election?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Krishnamoorthi. Okay. Thank you. I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues. Thank you.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Good morning.

Mr. Strzok. Good morning.

Ms. Jackson Lee. I'm Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. None of us have probably said where we're from. I'm from Houston, Texas, and have been a member of this committee for a long period of time.

I'll note that you are an Army veteran or a veteran of a branch, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And it is your view, as I understand it and not put words in your mouth, your view of the Bureau and its service to this Nation, how do you view the Bureau now?

Mr. Strzok. I love the Bureau. I think the role of the Bureau is of extraordinary importance to the FBI, to the rule of law, to the maintenance of liberty and justice, and I couldn't be prouder to be a part of that.

Ms. Jackson Lee. I understand there are about 35,000 members of the FBI, maybe give or take some.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Would you attribute to them some of the disparaging remarks that have been made about them nationally, or are you seeing, through your 22 years, hardworking individuals in the service of this Nation?

Mr. Strzok. Very much the latter. I would not attribute any of those remarks that have been discussed earlier.

Ms. Jackson Lee. So let me pursue a line of questioning that I hope that I won't do a little bit of a mishmash on it, but I want to begin just very briefly on the questions of bias. Do you have any reason to believe that the vast majority of FBI agents are partisan; they are Democrats, Republicans, or, in this instance, Democrats?

Mr. Strzok. All FBI agents have political opinions. I have

never seen that expressed in any partisan way.

Ms. Jackson Lee. There's no bar for FBI agents of having political affiliations, or is there?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And so, when FBI staffs a politically sensitive investigation, for example, a public corruption case, does the FBI consider the personal political persuasion of its agents in making those staffing decisions?

Mr. Strzok. They do not.

Ms. Jackson Lee. In your 22 years, have you been uncomfortable in national security sensitive investigations by looking over and saying, "This is a Democrat or Republican, and he or she is showing it"?

Mr. Strzok. No, I have not.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And that the results of the investigation has been influenced by a party affiliation?

Mr. Strzok. I've never seen that.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Therefore, as the Clinton investigation began to mature, you and your affiliation -- and may I ask your affiliation?

Mr. Strzok. I'm Independent.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And let me also ask, your status at the FBI now is what?

Mr. Strzok. I'm an employee. I'm a special agent, DAD and HOD.

Ms. Jackson Lee. All right. So you're still employed?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. It is your intent to stay employed?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. You would be disappointed if, for some reason, they reached down and determined that you needed to stay -- needed to go?

Mr. Strzok. Oh, very much so.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And you still think you have the ability to serve this Nation in a fair and impartial manner?

Mr. Strzok. Without question.

Ms. Jackson Lee. So let me, Mr. Strzok, the inspector general found that you placed a high priority on the Trump/Russia investigation fall of 2016 but stated that we did not have the confidence that Strzok's decision to prioritize the Russia investigation over following up on the Midyear-related investigative lead was free from bias. What is your reaction to this conclusion?

Mr. Strzok. I was deeply disappointed by that conclusion for a couple of reasons. The first is, I think the record, which the IG has, is very clear that, within hours of learning of the existence of the laptop, I assigned a subordinate supervisor, his agents, and some of his analysts, and an attorney to go up to New York and follow up on the laptop, which --

Ms. Jackson Lee. And this is -- this was the Weiner laptop?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am, that's correct. And --

Ms. Jackson Lee. Always put that word in front of it. There are a lot of laptops floating around.

Mr. Strzok. That's an excellent point. There are?

Ms. Jackson Lee. Including my own maybe. Thank you.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am. And, again --

Ms. Jackson Lee. You sent it to New York or you sent the instruction --

Mr. Strzok. Right. I asked them to go up to New York within hours. They ended up having --

Ms. Jackson Lee. Give me that timeframe. What --

Mr. Strzok. My recollection is either that evening, literally within 2 to 3 hours, or the following morning I had a conversation and that they ended up having a --

Ms. Jackson Lee. And you recall that they --

Mr. Strzok. I can't, but it's in the record. I want to say it was either on or about September 29.

Ms. Jackson Lee. End of September, I think that's an important point.

Mr. Strzok. End of September, yes. And they did, and they ended up calling because they wanted to see what the state was. They had an extended discussion with the New York folks who told them that the processing of the Weiner laptop was not complete and that they hadn't processed it, and they talked about some legal issues so -- and that they would get back when it was complete.

So my belief, you know, certainly that the inspector general's inference that somehow I back-burnered it is directly rebutted by the fact of following up and dispatching a team to do it.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Well, let me tie -- can you explain why you prioritize the Russia investigation in September/October? Did you do that?

Mr. Strzok. No. I don't see that as a binary decision. There were a lot of things that were going on at the Counterintelligence Division at the time. I was a Deputy Assistant Director, and so that's a fairly senior executive within Counterintelligence Division. So there are a number of things that were going on at the time.

I can tell you: I never took resources off one and put it onto the other. But I'd also say, Congresswoman, the -- there's a -- the nature of the allegations about the Russia investigations, I cannot think of a more grave allegation to the Counterintelligence Division or let alone the Nation that a hostile foreign power was seeking to clandestinely influence our Presidential election.

Mr. Nadler. So let me just ask --

Ms. Jackson Lee. Mr. Nadler, I'm yielding.

Mr. Nadler. Thank you.

Let me just ask you this point on that point. So, in other words, given the fact that you instructed some people to look into the Weiner laptop, you would characterize the assertion that you prioritized the Russian investigation as inaccurate?

Mr. Strzok. I would.

Mr. Nadler. Because they were both going on and --

Mr. Strzok. Right. And, sir, what I would say is, there were -- in my mind, in my recollection, I had put the appropriate

immediate managerial and subordinate staff on the matter to address it. I think, as the DAD, as any manager, as any executive, your job is to look at a host of competing priorities and decide where your limited resources, your limited time, how you're going to address them.

So I saw that as immediately appropriately addressed, and I continued then to look at the wide range of responsibilities I had, one which was -- is truly significant, the Russia investigations, but there are any number of other espionage cases or counterintelligence matters that were going on at the same time.

Mr. Nadler. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Yeah. If I recall your testimony, you sort of heightened the national security issue, not prioritizing, but just it struck you being in that arena that you better look into the potential of a campaign actually dealing with Russian operatives. If so, they were important, but you -- that struck you, is that correct, that some --

Mr. Strzok. Yes. All these things -- I say all these things are important. These are all legitimate, reasonable investigative avenues. When you look at the severity of impact to national security, I think it is demonstrably true that a foreign nation clandestinely putting themselves into a Presidential election, it doesn't get much more serious or grave than that.

Ms. Jackson Lee. So, in September, you were working on the Trump/Russia investigation 2016. Does that ring a bell? You can just

say yes or no.

Mr. Strzok. I -- Congresswoman, I'm not trying to be cute, but without getting into kind of our organizational structure classified information, I was involved in that process.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Yeah. Would you say it was a majority of your work?

Mr. Strzok. A significant portion of it. I don't know that it was the majority. It might have been close to the majority but a lot of it for sure.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Do you have any reason to -- let me just ask you this: What would be your understanding why the Clinton email investigation was made public and the Trump/Russia email was not by the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. So that decision, my understanding of that, by Director Comey was that he believed that based on the nature of the Clinton email investigation, which was not a -- there were counterintelligence elements to it, but it was primarily a pretty straightforward mishandling investigation of classified information, and that I don't want to speak for the Director's reasons. He's spoken at length in front of this body and others. But I see that as a different prospect than that of an ongoing counterintelligence investigation.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Somewhere like a mountain and a molehill?

Mr. Strzok. I would not -- I don't think I would use those terms. I think it is a fair -- if you're taking -- stepping back from any

particular case, if you were to compare a generic case of the -- of mishandling of classified information compared to a generic hostile and foreign power interfering with the electoral process and allegedly colluding with members of the candidate of a major party for the Presidency of the United States, those are vastly different threats to national security.

Ms. Jackson Lee. I'll accept that they're vastly different.

Let me just understand, can we say that the Trump/Russia investigation was a top priority?

Mr. Strzok. My understanding from Director Comey is that, yes, it was.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Were you looking to influence the election with the results of this process of investigation Trump/Russia?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Ms. Jackson Lee. I may have said this, but would you have acknowledged publicly the email investigation for Mrs. Clinton in the summer of 2016?

Mr. Strzok. That decision was made by Director Comey after a lot of discussion and debate. So he is the head of the FBI and that was his decision.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Would you have done it?

Mr. Strzok. I don't want to get into a hypothetical because I wasn't -- that was not the position I was in.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Is that usually done?

Mr. Strzok. It is not usually done.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Did you take any actions to bury or back-burner that laptop that seems to be floating around?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And would you consider some of the accusations of political bias -- and I'm just going to say between yourself and Lisa -- legitimate to the extent that you downplayed your oath, you diminished your responsibilities, and you were engaged in selecting internally support for one candidate over another --

Mr. Strzok. No.

Ms. Jackson Lee. -- in the Presidential election 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I don't agree with that at all. I consider those personal opinions exchanged with a close confidant and nothing else.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me just -- I think that I have concluded those. I just want to just finish by the point of -- the concept of burying the laptop and not doing the work, you don't believe -- on the Clinton investigation, you do not believe -- or you -- let me ask the question so that it is not my words. What is your opinion of what you did with respect to that investigation, burying, not pursuing it?

Mr. Strzok. I don't believe I buried it at all. I believe I took immediate action to assign subordinate personnel and subordinate managers who were completely uninvolved with the Russian investigations to pursue the matter and that they did that.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Strzok. Thank you.

Mr. Swalwell. Good afternoon, Mr. Strzok.

Mr. Strzok. Good afternoon, sir?

Mr. Swalwell. My name is Eric Swalwell. I serve on House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees.

Mr. Strzok, do you regret the text messages that you sent to Ms. Page with respect to Mr. Trump?

Mr. Strzok. Very much I regret them.

Mr. Swalwell. Okay. Are you sorry that you had sent them?

Mr. Strzok. I'm sorry because of the -- I'm sorry because of the deep pain and suffering that they have caused my family. That's something I'll always regret. I regret the way that they've been used by some to turn into some sort of political weapon that they are not and the damage that has been done with that.

Mr. Swalwell. Was it your decision alone to open the July 2016 investigation into the Trump campaign on a counterintelligence basis?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Swalwell. Okay. Did you recommend the opening of that investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that I needed to recommend it. I believed it's the appropriate thing to do.

Mr. Swalwell. But, I mean, were you the first person to recommend opening it?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Swalwell. Is it safe to say that others had also recommended opening it?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Swalwell. Now, you mentioned earlier that July 2016 is when the investigation was opened, but we know that actions are taken by the FBI before an investigation is officially open because, of course, that's how you gather the evidence. That informs the opening. When did you first learn that the FBI was taking actions to learn more about concerning contacts between Russians and the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. Again, I want to be careful to not step on any FBI equities or ongoing investigations. I think it is fair to say, without getting into classified detail, that the case was opened shortly upon receipt of the predication information.

Mr. Swalwell. Mr. Strzok, did you -- and, again, you've been accused of being the reason this investigation started, accused of being the reason that the Clinton investigation did not find the Anthony Weiner laptop sooner, did you tell Michael Cohen to try and do a Trump Tower deal with Moscow in December 2015?

Mr. Strzok. So my trouble is that question is easily answered, but what I don't want to do, as you know from your time on the Intel Committee, even denying something can be classified. So I defer to agency counsel on that answer and if I can or can't.

Ms. Besse. Just in terms of him, if he confirms or denies something, that it can be revealing, so it would be better for him not to be able to answer that question.

Mr. Swalwell. Again, I just have a few more with respect to this. Did you set up a June 9, 2016, Trump Tower meeting where the President's son-in-law, campaign chairman, and son met with people offering dirt

on the Russians? Was that your doing?

Mr. Strzok. Again, easily answered, but -- I mean, I think -- I would defer to the FBI and perhaps if there is -- that question is easily answered very much in a classified setting so I think it would be --

Mr. Swalwell. Let me put it this way, Mr. Strzok: Is it fair to say that, aside from the opinions that you expressed to Ms. Page about Mr. Trump, there was a whole mountain of evidence independent of anything you had done that related to actions that were concerning about what the Russians and the Trump campaign were doing?

Ms. Besse. So, Congressman, that may go into sort of the -- that will -- for Mr. Strzok to answer that question, that goes into the special counsel's investigation, so I don't think he can answer that question.

Mr. Swalwell. Sure. I understand. But I have to ask.

Mr. Nadler. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. Swalwell. Yes.

Mr. Nadler. I have to say that the answer to that question is readily available from the public record having nothing to do with the CIA or the FBI private records. I find it -- saying you can't answer questions that are readily available in the public record is a little not right.

Mr. Swalwell. Again, Mr. Strzok has been accused of being a lot of things that seem quite ridiculous, and I just want to make sure that it's clear that all of these other things that the Trump campaign did, Mr. Strzok was not involved in. I understand the concerns and

Mr. Goodlatte has actually offered for us to go into a classified space later if we may, and perhaps we can address that there.

Mr. Strzok --

Chairman Goodlatte. If I may, I don't think it relates to whether it's classified or not. I think it relates to whether or not we are going into the underlying substance of the investigation with regard that it be conducted by the special counsel, which we have for a long time determined we're not going into that.

Mr. Swalwell. Okay. So we just want to keep it with Hillary Clinton's emails?

Chairman Goodlatte. No. No. It relates to Mr. Strzok's involvement in all of these matters and the issues that he has been answering questions about today related to his involvement in each and bias. But if you get into questions about the substance of what he's doing, you're getting into a, first, a gray area, and it may be a very clear area that he shouldn't go to.

Mr. Swalwell. Understood.

Chairman Goodlatte. So I'm going to respect the advice of counsel for the Department.

Mr. Swalwell. So, Mr. Strzok, were you involved in the defensive briefing that was given to the Trump campaign in July 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I was involved in the planning for that.

Mr. Swalwell. And when you were planning for that, were you aware -- well, let me back up. Was this a general defensive briefing, or was it motivated by what you had learned the Russians were intending

to do?

Mr. Strzok. So which briefing? There were a couple of briefings.

Mr. Swalwell. July 19, 2016.

Mr. Strzok. Yes. Okay. So I think that was in the context of general CI briefings that were given to both nominees.

Mr. Swalwell. Who was given that briefing on the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. Who within the Trump campaign or who by the FBI?

Mr. Swalwell. In the Trump campaign.

Mr. Strzok. I would have to refer to the FBI's records.

Certainly, then-candidate Trump was involved. I don't recall there -- I have some vague recollection that Mr. Christie might have been there. Mr. Flynn might have been there. But I would -- I don't remember?

Mr. Swalwell. Did any of the individuals in the briefing disclose to you or your counterparts, your FBI colleagues, any contacts they had received from the Russians?

Mr. Strzok. I don't -- I know the answer to that, but I defer to agency counsel.

Ms. Besse. So it's very -- it's a very thin line for Mr. Strzok because he was involved in the investigation, so going into sort of the facts of what was said and how what was discussed goes into methods and how --

Mr. Swalwell. Sure. I understand.

Ms. Besse. -- sort of briefings or investigations are conducted.

Mr. Swalwell. Was the campaign -- a defensive briefing, as I understand it, is making a campaign aware of what threats could exist around them from foreign nationals who would seek to penetrate their campaigns and either steal secrets or recruit them. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. That's right.

Mr. Nadler. Excuse me 1 minute.

The Republican questioner, I forget who it was, asked a whole series of questions about conversations between Special Counsel Mueller and Mr. Strzok. Those questions were allowed. Why is this different?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, I believe those questions were asked of Mr. Strzok about what occurred with the conversation with Mr. Mueller.

Mr. Nadler. Yes, what was the conversation with Mr. Mueller.

Ms. Besse. About the text and the substance of the text messages.

Mr. Nadler. And this is different how?

Ms. Besse. This is going into the investigation itself and what was discussed in terms of the subject matter and things that were involved in the investigation.

Mr. Swalwell. Well, without disclosing what was said by the Trump --

Chairman Goodlatte. Let me interject, and maybe I'll help you out here. I think it's appropriate to ask questions about how two or more defensive briefings were handled if there's a contrast and comparison. I think it's appropriate to ask who was involved. He said he doesn't recall some of that. But you can't get into the substance

of what was shared. I think that's where the --

Mr. Swalwell. Okay. So, understanding that, Mr. Strzok, was the Trump campaign asked to report any offers from foreign governments to interfere with the U.S. electoral process? Without telling us what they told you, were they asked?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection is that all the briefings to the candidates, part of that briefing was to let us know if you see anything unusual.

Mr. Swalwell. How many defensive briefings, to your knowledge, were provided to the Trump campaign before election day?

Mr. Strzok. I believe there were two, one to candidate Trump and one to Vice Presidential candidate Pence. But I'm not -- that was the plan. I'm not certain if the one to then-Vice President candidate Pence was provided. It may have been. I don't recall. I don't know.

Mr. Swalwell. Did you mention that General Flynn was a part of one of the briefings?

Mr. Strzok. Well, he was part of a briefing. I don't recall if he was part of the initial counterintelligence briefing or a later briefing that was given following the election prior to the inauguration.

Mr. Swalwell. And what did you want the candidate or the candidate's team to do if they did have any contacts from the Russians? What did you ask of them?

Mr. Strzok. I wasn't there so I don't know what was asked specifically. The general practice in a defensive brief is not only

to sensitize and make the person being briefed what the threats are, but also to ask and encourage them for any information that they have or might come across that would indicate any such attempt or activity to let us know.

Mr. Swalwell. So as I understand, you were not present at either of the candidate Trump briefings?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Swalwell. You're just aware that they occurred and the content that was discussed?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know specific to those briefings what was discussed. It is a typical part of a defensive briefing that that is included.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you.

I'll yield.

Mr. Nadler. Mr. Strzok, I have two quick questions for you. Did any of your opinions expressed in your text messages impact in any way the evidence you collected as part of the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. And I apologize for this question, but I want to get it on the record: Did you ever fabricate evidence that was used in the Trump/Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Nadler. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cohen. Congressman Cohen from Tennessee, and I just want to thank you for your volunteering to come down here and talk.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Cohen. Although I think the substance of your testimony is not what's important. I think what's important is the venue and the fact that this has been called and the idea that there is questions being asked of you concerning bias, and I think that's the whole picture. Doesn't matter what you answer or what happens here. It's theater.

I appreciate the FBI. I appreciate you. I appreciate what Mr. Comey did and what Mr. Mueller's doing. I've heard Mr. Trump say to Putin and to Kim Jong-un: I'm honored to meet you. I'm honored to meet you. I thank you for your service, and I hope you continue representing the United States of America and the FBI.

Mr. Strzok. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Cohen. You're welcome.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

[12:14 p.m.]

Mr. Lieu. Thank you, Agent Strzok. I'm Congressman Ted Lieu.

I listened with great interest to your answers to what my Republican colleagues asked you this morning, and it appears to me that a number of your text messages have been misconstrued or mischaracterized by the public and by the press. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Good afternoon, sir.

Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Lieu. Would you like the opportunity to testify publicly to explain your side of the story to the American people?

Mr. Strzok. I would.

Mr. Lieu. The text messages you wrote were to Lisa Page, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Lieu. They were not intended for public consumption, correct?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Lieu. And so when my Republican colleague asked, well, could a reasonable person interpret this text message in so-and-so way, that is completely irrelevant, because the only person we're worried about is what did Lisa Page think and what did you think. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Lieu. And clearly what you thought and Lisa Page thought had context behind it, because you all attended different meetings, you were at the FBI, you had information the public did not. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Lieu. All right. So it would be important to hear publicly what you believe your text messages meant given the context that only you and Lisa Page knew. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. All right. To selectively take text messages in the abstract and launch them on TV or used by my Republican colleagues to take them out of context is wrong and it is not the truth. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Lieu. All right. So despite all of that, Robert Mueller called you into his office -- and, by the way, on our information, you were removed from the special counsel investigation on July 28th, 2017, not August.

So in that meeting you stated that Robert Mueller was regretful because he wanted to not only run an investigation that was free of bias and independent but also had the perception of being free of bias, correct?

Mr. Strzok. That was my perception. I would defer to Special Counsel Mueller as to what he actually thought. But my experience with him and his investigation and his integrity as a man, not only as special counsel but throughout his career, is that he absolutely is dedicated to running any investigation or operation with the utmost integrity and appearance of integrity.

Mr. Lieu. And he removed you without even giving you an ability

to even explain your texts because he was so concerned about the bias that that could cause. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. I don't want to characterize what his reasoning or thoughts were behind that. My belief was that there was not a discussion of that. It was an understanding that this was a -- not at all an accusation of wrongdoing. This was a function of a perception that --

Mr. Lieu. And upon finding out about those text messages he removed you pretty much immediately. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Lieu. Okay.

Now, the IG report that came out, in it, it specifically says, the IG says: Our review did not find evidence to connect the political views expressed in these text messages to the specific investigative decisions that we reviewed. Rather, consistent with the analytical approach described above, we found that these specific decisions were the result of discretionary judgments made during the course of an investigation by the Midyear agents and prosecutors and that these judgments were not unreasonable.

You would agree with that, wouldn't you?

Mr. Strzok. I would.

Mr. Lieu. And that's because we expect FBI agents, first of all, would have personal views; but second, that when they go on duty, they check those views at the door. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. The IG report also found the following: We found that Strzok was not the sole decisionmaker for any of the specific Midyear investigative decisions we examined in that chapter. We further found evidence that in some instances Strzok and Page advocated for more aggressive investigative measures in the Midyear investigation, such as the use of grand jury subpoenas and search warrants to obtain evidence.

So, in fact, you were pushing for a more aggressive investigation of the Hillary Clinton email issue. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Lieu. Okay.

It is not disputed -- well, you're still a current FBI employee, right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Lieu. So it is not disputed that FBI Director Christopher Wray is a Republican nominated by a Republican President, confirmed by a Republican-controlled Senate. Also not disputed, he gave over \$37,000 exclusively to Republican candidates.

Knowing that, do you still trust Christopher Wray, as I do, to be fair and impartial in doing his job?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I do.

Mr. Lieu. And that's because in America we allow FBI agents, FBI directors, law enforcement to have personal views, but when they go on duty we expect them to check those views at the door and to do their job based on law and facts. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Lieu. Is that what you did in this case?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, it is.

Mr. Lieu. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. Raskin. Thank you.

Mr. Strzok, my name is Jamie Raskin. I represent the Eighth District in Maryland.

Mr. Strzok. Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Raskin. Welcome.

The IG report indicated that on October 21, 2016, you briefed a group of retired FBI personnel on the Midyear investigation during a conference call. Do you remember that?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Raskin. Can you explain to us what the purpose of the briefing was?

Mr. Strzok. The purpose of that call was to provide a set of case facts about what had been done with the Clinton email investigation to a variety of, as I recall it, senior retired FBI personnel who were getting questions about the FBI's conduct of the investigation.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. What were some of the concerns about retired FBI agents speaking to the media about the Clinton investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I think the, as I understood it, the direction from the -- so, sir, I don't know that I can entirely answer the question.

Mr. Raskin. Were there concerns that you expressed or that someone expressed about the retired FBI agents speaking to the media

about the Clinton investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I did not have concerns. I think the, as I understood it, the direction from the senior management of the FBI was to provide a briefing to these individuals so that they had the facts of what had occurred and spoke to somebody who was much closer to the line and they could ask whatever questions so that they could assure themselves that they had the accurate information about what occurred in the case.

Mr. Raskin. Who else from the FBI was on that call?

Mr. Strzok. So my recollection is Mike Corton, who is the head of public affairs, was there. He may or may not have had additional staff in the room at the time. I believe Ms. Page was on the call. I believe that's it, but I'm not certain.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. How often does the FBI brief retired FBI personnel on active cases?

Mr. Strzok. So the case was closed. I don't know how often it happens on active cases.

Mr. Raskin. So this was not a common practice to your knowledge?

Mr. Strzok. Well, so, again, sir, the case, I believe, was closed at the time that call occurred. And as to how often personnel are briefed to closed cases, I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Goelman. May I have one moment?

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Raskin. Did you mention at any point during this call follow-up investigative acts by the FBI, such as investigating the

emails on the Weiner laptop?

Mr. Strzok. No, because my recollection of the timeframe of that call was it occurred before -- I believe temporally it occurred before we had made the decision to reopen active investigations and seek a search warrant.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. Shortly after this call Rudy Giuliani made several TV appearances claiming that he was getting inside information from both former and current FBI agents.

On October 25 and 26, a couple of days before Director Comey wrote to Congress about reopening the investigation, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani suggested that the Trump campaign had, quote, a couple surprises, end quote, a couple things up our sleeves that should turn things around.

Do you happen to recall those statements made by Mr. Giuliani?

Mr. Strzok. I recall them after the fact, reading about them in the media, and I may have heard them at the time and just don't recall.

Mr. Raskin. On the 28th of October he claimed he had a, quote, pipeline into the FBI, and agents were, quote, outraged at being turned down by the Justice Department to open a grand jury, unquote. Do you recall that statement?

Mr. Strzok. Well, I don't know -- I don't know if I recall that specific statement. I remember broadly that Mr. Giuliani was making statements to the effect of getting information from agents.

Mr. Raskin. He also said there was, quote, a revolution going on inside the FBI about the original conclusion. I know that from

former agents. I know that even from a few active agents.

Do you recall that statement by Mr. Giuliani?

Mr. Strzok. Again, I certainly remember it from recent media report, and I remember a variety of statements he was making at the time, but not with specificity which exact ones.

Mr. Raskin. Got you. On November 4th, in an appearance on "Fox & Friends," Mr. Giuliani was asked if he knew about the FBI's possession of the laptop before Director Comey wrote to The Hill. He responded: Did I hear about it? You're darn right I heard about it.

Do you recall that statement?

Mr. Strzok. Again, I don't remember at the time that specific statement, other than just a variety of statements that he was making. I have seen it reported since in the media.

Mr. Raskin. And have you ever served as a source for Mr. Giuliani at any point?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Raskin. Are you aware of any former or current FBI personnel who were communicating with Mr. Giuliani at this time?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Raskin. Or during the time of the Midyear investigation.

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Raskin. Are you in communications with any former FBI agents who are or were in contact with Mr. Giuliani?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. And did you have any reason to believe that

any individual on that October 21 call were in contact with Mr. Giuliani?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know.

Mr. Raskin. Do you have any reason to know who his sources are?

Mr. Strzok. I do not.

Mr. Raskin. Or were. Do you have any reason to believe that the sources in the FBI were actually speaking to Mr. Giuliani.

Mr. Strzok. I don't know.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. And let's see, and forgive me, I may have missed this before. I just wanted to ask you one question about the tweets that have been made famous through this process.

Do you believe that anything that you said in those tweets reflected upon your determination to alter the public outcome of the investigation in any way?

Mr. Strzok. Rephrase that question.

Mr. Raskin. I guess my question is, did those private tweets reflect your public determination to bias the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. So they're private texts --

Mr. Raskin. The private texts, right.

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely in no way did they indicate, nor would I ever do anything to influence the election.

Mr. Raskin. So do you believe that the obsession with these texts represents an irrelevant distraction?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. Thank you for your testimony.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

BY MS. KIM:

Q Thank you, Mr. Strzok.

I would like to go back to the questions about defensive briefings with the Trump campaign.

So you said that you did not participate in these briefings. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Did you supervise the individuals who gave these briefings?

A No.

Q No. Who would have supervised the individuals who gave these briefings?

A My recollection of the personnel who attended that were individuals from our Washington field office that fell under the supervisory chain there.

Q Got it. And if the Trump campaign had reported any contacts with foreign officials during this briefing would you have been informed about that?

A Yes. I assume, yes. But, yes.

Q Did the Trump campaign report any contacts with foreign officials during this briefing?

A Again, easily answered, but I don't know if I can in this setting.

Ms. Besse. Right. That would go, again, into his investigative role, so I would instruct him not to answer.

Ms. Kim. I understand.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

We have asked this question to, I think, at least two FBI witnesses prior. So I believe we asked Mr. Priestap about this and I believe we asked Mr. McCabe about this. We were permitted to get the answer, the easily answerable answer to this question before. So it is on the record. I don't know if that sways the FBI equities or not.

Ms. Besse. Can I confer with the witness?

Ms. Kim. Sure.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Besse. My instruction to the witness will stand for him not to answer because of his investigative role.

Ms. Kim. I understand. Thank you.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

BY MS. KIM:

Q Do you know when the defensive briefings occurred?

A Not offhand.

Q If I represent to you that the defensive briefing to President Trump happened on July 19th, 2016, is that generally concordant with your understanding of the facts?

A Yes.

Q Do you know if that was after the June 2016 meeting in Trump Tower with senior campaign officials, including Donald Trump Jr. and Jared Kushner and a purported emissary from the Russian Government?

A All I can say to that is, based on open source reporting and looking at the calendar, that it would have occurred afterwards.

Q I understand. Do you know if the defensive briefing occurred in close proximity to an August 3rd, 2016, meeting that has been publicly reported between Donald Trump Jr. and an emissary who told Donald Trump Jr. that, quote, "The princes who led Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were eager to help his father win the election as President"?

A Again, based on a review of the public records and the dates at hand, yes, they were in close proximity.

Q And, again, if any of these contacts, foreign contacts had been reported to the FBI, would you have known about these?

A I would.

Q If the Trump campaign did not report these would you have

been surprised?

A I don't -- I don't want to speculate as to what my reaction would be. My professional hope would be that any campaign following particularly a defensive briefing, had they been approached by foreign governments in a way that appeared to be -- involve any sort of subterfuge or sort of -- anything inappropriate, that they would report that to the FBI.

Q I think my time is running out, so this is my last question for this round.

How important is it for national security purposes for political campaigns, particularly national Presidential campaigns, to report offers of foreign interference in U.S. elections to the FBI?

A I think it's extraordinarily important. If you look -- the foundation of what we are as a democracy is people exercising their right to vote to elect their representatives, and there's no higher representative than the President of the United States. So the suggestion that something so core to who we are as a Nation would be under attack by not only a foreign nation, but a hostile, aggressive foreign nation, is of extraordinary importance.

Ms. Kim. Thank you, Mr. Strzok.

We're going off the record. It is 12:31.

[Recess.]

Mr. Parmiter. Let's go back on the record. The time is 12:41 p.m. And we'll turn it over to Mr. Gowdy.

Mr. Gowdy. Thank you.

Mr. Strzok, on July 21st, 2016, you texted Lisa Page: Trump is a disaster. I have no idea how destabilizing his presidency would be.

Now, July 21st, 2016. When did the Russia probe officially begin from the Bureau standpoint?

Mr. Strzok. Good afternoon, sir.

My recollection is that it was at the end of July.

Mr. Gowdy. Who drafted the electronic communication?

Mr. Strzok. Can I -- I believe that's classified. Again, easily answered, but I'm not sure I can discuss it here.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you draft it?

Mr. Strzok. Same answer, sir.

Ms. Besse. Congressman, since the document is classified I would not have him answer any questions as to the contents of it.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, I haven't asked him whether or not he drafted it or signed it. I haven't asked him about the contents of it, not yet I haven't.

It's not a complicated question, and you and I both know the answer to it. Did you draft or sign the initiation document that began the Russia probe?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I can answer that question easily in a classified information. My understanding is that --

Mr. Gowdy. I'm not asking you about the content. I'm asking -- is your signature classified?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, the drafting of the -- who drafted the communication is on the communication itself, and since the

communication -- the contents of the communication itself is classified I would instruct him --

Mr. Gowdy. The date is also on there. Is the date classified?

Ms. Besse. I'm not aware that the date is classified, but who --

Mr. Gowdy. How is his signature classified if the date is not classified?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, I'm sorry, the document itself is still classified. He knows the answer and you know the answer, but because this is not a classified setting --

Mr. Gowdy. Is it fair to say the Russia probe began on July the 31st, 2016, officially?

Mr. Strzok. I would have to check the documentation to find out. If you're representing that's the -- and that it is an unclassified date -- I'm happy to accept that representation.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you take any steps with respect to the Russia investigation before July 31st, 2016?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, that goes back into the investigation itself. And because that is the substance of the special counsel investigation, while Mr. Strzok may have been involved in the investigation before it became -- went under the purview of the special counsel -- because it is an ongoing investigation I'm going to instruct him --

Mr. Gowdy. Right. We're nowhere near the special counsel now. That was in 2017. I'm still in July of 2016, and I want to know whether or not this witness took any steps before the Russia investigation

officially began, with officially being July 31st.

Did you do anything before July 31st?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I can tell you I think in a way the FBI will agree with that the acts I took were in accordance with FBI rules, regulation, and policy and the law.

Mr. Gowdy. That's a great answer to a question I didn't ask.

Mr. Strzok. And, sir --

Mr. Gowdy. Did you take any steps with respect to the Russia investigation before July the 31st of 2016?

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, as we indicated in the beginning and as we have consistently done, we are going to accept instructions from the FBI attorneys here as to what we can and cannot say. Continually asking the same question is only going to continually get the same nonanswer.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you go to [REDACTED] in May of 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I don't believe I did.

Mr. Gowdy. When did you go to [REDACTED]?

Mr. Strzok. I made several trips to [REDACTED].

Mr. Gowdy. Did you do go in connection with the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Again, I don't know that I can answer that in an unclassified setting or with regard to an ongoing investigation.

Chairman Goodlatte. We are going to go in a classified setting, so I would save some time in that setting by this side of what is truly classified here rather than --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, here we are, Agent Strzok, July 21st, 2016, 10 days before the Russia investigation officially began from the FBI standpoint, and you said: Trump is a disaster. I have no idea how destabilizing his presidency would be.

What did you mean by "destabilizing"?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my recollection of that text was it was a private expression of my personal opinion to Ms. Page and just reflected my belief based on the things I had seen him saying and doing on the campaign trail.

Mr. Gowdy. Destabilizing to whom or to what?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I don't know. I can't --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, you're the one that used the word, Agent Strzok. Who should I ask what you meant by it if you're not the right witness?

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely it is my words, sir. I would tell you it is my recollection at this point that statement was made in terms of my personal opinion about the prospects of his candidacy and being the President of the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. Destabilizing to whom or to what?

Mr. Strzok. I think destabilizing, sir, in the broadest sense of the word, based on some of the statements he was making on any number of topics and my personal belief about how that might impact the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. So destabilizing to the United States? See, it wasn't that tough. It didn't have to take that long. That's what you meant, destabilizing to the United States, right?

Mr. Strzok. No, sir, I think --

Mr. Gowdy. That's what you just testified to.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I just said is my recollection now is that destabilizing in the sense of how that might impact the United States, but that is a nonspecific recollection --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, please help me understand how destabilizing from the standpoint of how it might impact the United States is not destabilizing to the United States.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I'm saying is that looking back almost 2 years ago or roughly 2 years ago I cannot put myself at that point in time with what current events or statements may or may not have been made at that point in time.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. Well, that's 10 days before the Russia probe began from the Bureau's standpoint.

Now, the day the Russia probe began, the day it was initiated, the day you signed a document initiating it this is what you said: And damn this feels momentous.

What feels momentous?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I am happy to discuss that in the classified setting.

Mr. Gowdy. No, no, no, the word "momentous" is not classified, Agent Strzok. What felt momentous?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, the word "momentous" in the text is not classified. The reference of that text and what it means is, and I am happy to answer that question --

Mr. Gowdy. Was it the Russia probe in general?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I am happy to answer that --

Mr. Gowdy. Is the Russia probe -- is the existence of -- is the same investigation that Jim Comey publicly confirmed, that was then later confirmed in the special counsel memo, the existence of that investigation, is it your position that is classified?

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, if the witness' use of the word "momentous" was based on evidence that he knew because of this classified investigation then his answer will inevitably include classified information, which is unlawful in this setting.

Mr. Gowdy. How about the next sentence: Because this matters. What is "this"?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, again, I am happy to discuss that in a classified setting and answer all of your questions --

Mr. Gowdy. So "this" is also classified. "Momentous" is classified. "This" is classified.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, the text is not classified, as I have indicated to you now two times. The context of that statement, the reasoning and the meaning behind that statement is, and I would be very happy to answer that question in a classified setting.

Mr. Gowdy. You will have the chance, I can assure you of that.

The other one did, too, "the other one" being what?

Mr. Strzok. "The other one" I believe refers to the Clinton email investigation.

Mr. Gowdy. But that was to ensure we didn't F something up. What

does the word "F," what's that short for?

Mr. Strzok. Fuck.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. So what you really were saying was that was to ensure we didn't fuck something up.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my text was a comparison between something we can talk about in closed setting and my belief that the Clinton investigation, while very important, was, when you strip away the actors involved, the underlying allegation of a mishandling of classified information was of a substantively different nature than what Director Comey has publicly announced, that -- the initiation of a case into clandestine Russian interference in the election.

Mr. Gowdy. Agent Strzok, I'm just using the words you used.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Gowdy. That was to ensure we didn't fuck something up.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir. And what I'm explaining what I meant by that is my use of that to compare a case, which is just looking at the activity comparatively minor in terms of its impact on national security compared to the allegation that the Government of Russia was actively working to subvert the Presidential election of the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. Is there any way they could both be important?

Mr. Strzok. Of course they are both --

Mr. Gowdy. Do you have to choose?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, they are both important. Every investigation that the Bureau has is important.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why did you say this matters because this matters, and in case the reader missed how much it mattered you put it in all caps?

Mr. Strzok. I did. And again, my recollection of that text, it is drawing an objective comparison between a case which involves alleged mishandling of classified information with a case which involves allegations that the Government of Russia was colluding with individuals in the campaign for President of the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, on that same day you texted: I can protect our country at many levels.

What did you mean by that?

Mr. Strzok. That statement was made in the context of a job that I was considering applying for to be deputy assistant director and the decision of whether to apply for that or not, what my role and responsibilities would be either in either job, if I -- and I took -- if I ended up taking that deputy assistant director job that I would be at a higher level and removed from some of the ongoing case work.

In fact, I did apply for that job. I did -- was given that position. And that's merely my reflection on where I wanted to work.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, what I find interesting in connection with your response, Agent Strzok, is that that response would have been interesting had the predicate text had something to do with Russia. But it actually didn't.

"Maybe you're meant to stay where you are because you're meant to protect the country from that menace."

Is it your testimony the "menace" was Russia?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, that text, if I recall correctly, was Ms. Page's.

Mr. Gowdy. Yes, and this is the one you responded to, and now what you're telling us is that you were responding in connection to Russia's efforts, but that's not what she sent you, Agent Strzok. She sent you: Protect the country from that menace.

Mr. Strzok. Sir --

Mr. Gowdy. What menace?

Mr. Strzok. You would have to ask Ms. Page that.

Mr. Gowdy. I'm asking you because you responded to it, and you didn't say: What do you mean by menace? So I'm assuming that you understood what she meant by "menace." What did you understand it to mean?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my understanding of the word "menace" and the use of "menace" was the broad context of the Government of Russia's attempts to interfere with our election.

To the extent those allegations involved credible information that members of the Trump campaign might be actively colluding, I see that as a broad effort by the Government of Russia. So I don't think you can tease it apart, sir, but it is inaccurate to -- and I did not see that as Mr. -- or then candidate Trump.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, maybe 2 days later we can gain a little bit of clarity on August the 8th, where Lisa Page texted you not "Russia's not ever going to become President, right?" "Trump's not ever going

to become president, right?"

Can we agree that that predicate text was about Trump and not about Russia?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. And your response was: No, period. No, he's not, period. We'll stop it.

What did you mean by "no"?

Mr. Strzok. No was my -- my recollection of "no" -- and let me just say, there's been a lot written about this text. And what I can tell you, Congressman, is in no way does that suggest that I did or even considered taking any action to --

Mr. Gowdy. I'll tell you what, Agent Strzok, before we get to what you didn't mean by "no," how about we settle on what you did mean by it, and then we can discuss the entire universe of what you didn't mean by it.

The precise question was: Trump's not ever going to become President, right? And then if you missed that "right" she put again, "right," with a question mark. And the next word from you is "no." So what did you think the question was?

Mr. Strzok. I thought that question was her personal question as to whether or not he would become President. My answer no was my personal belief that I did not think he would be.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why did you say, "No, he's not"? Why didn't you say, "No, I don't think he's going to, no, I don't think he'll win the electoral college, no, I don't think he'll do well in

Ohio"? Why did you say, "No, he's not"?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, because my recollection of that text, which I don't recall specifically writing, is it is late at night --

Mr. Gowdy. Are you denying writing it?

Mr. Strzok. Oh, I'm not denying writing it at all.

Mr. Gowdy. So whether or not you recall it or not, it's yours?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. Not recalling that, but I believe it is my writing.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. "No. No, he's not." He's not what?

Mr. Strzok. Going to be -- my belief that he is not going to be President.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. "We'll stop it." Who is "we"?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my recollection is, looking at that time when the then-candidate Trump had just come off of a speech where he was insulting the immigrant family of a fallen military war hero, I found it unbelievable the American people --

Mr. Gowdy. So the "we" was you and the Khan family?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, if I could finish.

Mr. Gowdy. Is that your testimony, you and the Kahn family, that's who "we" was?

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, if you want testimony from a witness you're going to need to allow the witness to answer your questions.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my response to that was coming off a speech where then-candidate Trump was insulting the family, the immigrant family of a fallen war hero, it was so unbelievable to me that the

American people that I, that anybody, given those sort of sentiments and statements, would elect him to the Presidency. That was my personal belief.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Well, that helps, Agent Strzok. By "we" you meant the United States. Is that what you meant by that?

Mr. Strzok. Honestly, I don't know that I had any specific --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, who wrote it?

Mr. Strzok. My sense was we --

Mr. Gowdy. Who wrote it?

Mr. Strzok. -- the United States and American people, would not elect him.

Mr. Gowdy. Who wrote it? Who wrote the "we'll"?

Mr. Strzok. I wrote it, Congressman.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. And it is really not that complicated of a question.

Mr. Strzok. It's not.

Mr. Gowdy. You can go back through the Democrat convention again if you want to, you can go through all the speakers that spoke, but my question is going to still be the same at the end. Who did you mean by "we"?

Mr. Strzok. And, sir, what I am telling you is my best sense, looking at this text that I didn't recall until I read it very recently, was that "we" is my belief that the American people, there is no way that they're going to elect him.

And, sir, I would add what it does not mean, what it is not is

any statement that I would ever consider, let alone take any official action, to impact the Presidency of the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. That's great. I'm glad you got that out. That actually wasn't my question, but we may get to that.

What did you mean by "it"?

Mr. Strzok. My plain reading of that text leads me that "it" is that the American people would elect then-candidate Trump to be the President.

Mr. Gowdy. So the "we" is you speaking on behalf of what, the all 100 million that you thought would vote for Secretary Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. "We" is my -- as I sit here now my best recollection -- that "we" is my sense that the American people would not elect candidate Trump.

Mr. Gowdy. In March of 2016 was the Midyear Exam still going on, was that investigation still going on, the one where you didn't want to -- you wanted to make sure you didn't fuck things up?

Mr. Strzok. March of 2016 the case was still ongoing.

Mr. Gowdy. Right. And that's the same month you texted the vote would be 100 million to zero.

Mr. Strzok. I would have to check the dates, but I'll take your representation that's the date.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Well, did you send the text? Are you the one that wrote 100 million to zero?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I did.

Mr. Gowdy. You can't think of a single solitary American that

would vote for the Republican nominee?

Mr. Strzok. I think I was engaging in a bit of hyperbole and personal interaction and conversation with a close friend.

Mr. Gowdy. You can't think of a single solitary American -- well, who was the Republican nominee at that point? Because I don't think there was one.

Mr. Strzok. I think that's right.

Mr. Gowdy. So you were just convinced that the person you were investigating, that you had yet to even interview, wasn't going to be indicted, wasn't going to plead to an information, was going to be available to win 100 million to nothing.

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, as I said, that statement I firmly believe was hyperbole.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Well, let's -- I'll tell you what -- how about we --

Mr. Strzok. I can envision a large number of people who would --

Mr. Gowdy. How about we do this then?

Mr. Strzok. -- vote for the Republican nominee, whoever that ended up being.

Mr. Gowdy. How about we just drop it down to 10 million to zero? If it was hyperbole we'll just cut it, we'll cut it by a tenth, 10 million to zero. You thought the person you had under investigation, you hadn't even finished the investigation, you hadn't even interviewed the target of your investigation, but you already had her winning the Presidency?

Mr. Strzok. I don't read that text that way. I read that text as my --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, how can you win if you don't run, Agent Strzok?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I read that text as my personal belief that, based on whatever was occurring at that moment in time, led me personally to believe that the --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, I'll tell you what was occurring at that time, Agent Strzok. You were supposed to be investigating the very person that you had winning the Presidency, that's what was going on at that time, Agent. Is there something else going on at that time that would have been more important to you?

Mr. Strzok. Well, there are a number of things that were going on that were very important. The Midyear investigation was certainly important.

Mr. Gowdy. Had you interviewed the target --

Mr. Strzok. There were a host of other investigations that were going on.

Mr. Gowdy. Had you interviewed the target of the investigation yet?

Mr. Strzok. I would not use the word "target." We had not interviewed Secretary Clinton at the time.

Mr. Gowdy. Damn, you wouldn't use the word "target"?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, as you know as a former prosecutor, the word "target" is a word very specifically used by the Department of Justice --

Mr. Gowdy. What word would you use, witness, potential witness, suspect?

Mr. Strzok. I would say a critical player in the investigation.

Mr. Gowdy. Critical player.

Mr. Strzok. Right. My recollection is that the case did not have --

Mr. Gowdy. Whose server was it, Agent Strzok?

Mr. Strzok. It was -- well, there are a variety of people who used that server --

Mr. Gowdy. Whose server was it? That's a really simple question. Whose server was it, Agent Strzok?

Mr. Strzok. The server was run by a variety of entities and used by people including the Clinton Foundation, Secretary Clinton, former President Clinton. My understanding legally it was established and run at one point in time --

Mr. Gowdy. Who sent and received --

Mr. Strzok. Sir, can --

Mr. Gowdy. Who sent and received information marked as classified on that server?

Mr. Strzok. Secretary Clinton, amongst others who were --

Mr. Gowdy. So your position is that she was just an interesting witness?

Mr. Strzok. No, sir, she was one of the -- she was one of the individuals that we were looking at in the investigation.

When I answered you --

Mr. Gowdy. Looking at, looking at, but not target.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, when I answered you, it was in the context of the formal use of the term "target" and the formal use of the term "subject," both as DOJ uses that term and as the way the FBI uses that term.

Mr. Gowdy. Agent Strzok, we're both --

Mr. Strzok. It is clear, Congressman, that Secretary Clinton -- we were -- the goals of the investigation were to, one, understand why and how and if classified information came to be placed on that server; two, who did that and the circumstances by which they did it; and, three, whether or not a foreign power gained access to that.

So it was not -- Secretary Clinton was in that group of people we were interested in, but she was not by any means the only person that we had an investigative interest in.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Well, let's go back to March of 2016 when you wrote 100 million to zero would be the election result, and you said that was hyperbolic. So we're going to scale that down to just 10 million to zero.

How many witnesses had yet to be interviewed at that point?

Mr. Strzok. I couldn't tell you, sir.

Mr. Gowdy. How many witness interviews did you do after March?

Mr. Strzok. I would have to check the record.

Mr. Gowdy. A dozen?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know. I would need to check. That is a

noble answer. I do not know that answer sitting here -- sitting before you here today.

Mr. Gowdy. Give me your best estimate.

Mr. Strzok. I don't want to speculate on the numbers based on that. Without a review of the case that would be irresponsible.

Mr. Gowdy. Ten?

Mr. Strzok. Sir -- more than five, but --

Mr. Gowdy. More than five, including what you consider to be an interesting witness in this fact pattern. I use the word "target," but you're on the record as saying you don't agree with the word "target," so that's fine.

Mr. Strzok. I'm on the record, sir, saying she was not considered a target by the Department of Justice.

Mr. Gowdy. That's fine. That's fine. Just like I said, you're on the record as saying she's not a target. That's my word, not yours. But you had yet to interview her regardless of what you call her.

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Gowdy. But yet you had her winning the Presidency, Agent Strzok. Can you see how that might possibly lead a cynic to think that maybe you'd already made up your mind?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I am telling you my sense and my belief of whatever the Presidential election and the candidates and where that was going had absolutely no bearing on any act I took as an FBI agent.

Mr. Gowdy. I hear you, Agent Strzok. That's about the eighth time you've said that. But let me -- let me help you with this a little

bit. It is really difficult to run and win when you've been charged with and/or convicted of a felony. It's a real challenge.

So the fact that you had her running and winning before you had concluded the investigation, you can sit there and read whatever answer your lawyer gave you to read about how it didn't impact your decisionmaking all you want, but you had her running and winning before you even bothered to interview her. That's what we're left with.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I disagree that that is what you're left with. What you are left with are my belief that I am telling you that my personal opinion was that she was a compelling candidate and was likely to win.

I am telling you what you can take away is the fact that my personal belief, like the personal belief of every single FBI agent, did not impact my official acts in any way.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. Now we're up to nine. You've made that point really clear. You've done a good job of reciting that.

Now I want to go back to what you meant by "it" -- "We'll stop it."

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I think I've answered that.

Mr. Gowdy. What was the answer?

Mr. Strzok. The answer as I recall that I gave you was the "it" that the American people would not elect candidate Trump.

Mr. Gowdy. No, no, that was the "we." That was the "we," Agent Strzok. We spent a long time on the "we." What was the "it"?

Mr. Strzok. The "it" was the -- that President Trump would be

elected President -- or then-candidate Trump.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. So we are less than 10 days into an investigation that you were at a minimum a major participant in and perhaps running yourself, and you are talking about stopping the Presidency of the person that you were supposed to be dispassionately and objectively investigating?

Mr. Strzok. I can -- well, what's the question, sir?

Mr. Gowdy. Is that true?

Mr. Strzok. Is what true? I'm asking you to rephrase.

Mr. Gowdy. The whole predicate. We are less than -- we are 8 days into an investigation that you either ran or were a major participant in, and you're supposed to be dispassionately and objectively looking at the facts, and you have already declared that you are going to stop the Presidency of the Republican nominee.

Mr. Strzok. No, sir. That is not what I've said. What I have said is my personal belief that the American people I did not believe would elect the President. That is fundamentally different from what you just said and suggested.

Mr. Gowdy. We'll let the reader decide how fundamentally different it is, Agent Strzok.

A whopping week later, a whole week later, 15 days into your dispassionate, objective investigation into what Russia did and with whom, if anyone, did they do it: I want to believe the path you threw out for consideration in Andy's office.

What path?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection of that text was, in light of the predication information that we had received from an extraordinarily sensitive source, that there was a debate, as there frequently is with sensitive sources and methods, about the protection of that source and method weighed against the aggressiveness and pursuing the investigation at a risk to that source.

And there were some, and my reading of this is that Ms. Page was included in that some, who argued that it was unlikely that candidate Trump would get elected and that, therefore, we did not need to risk that source and method, that we could just kind of go in a traditional CI manner and go slowly. I remember --

Mr. Gowdy. When you say risk a source and method, you mean in a trial, Agent Strzok?

Mr. Strzok. No, I'm meaning about the exposure and the compromise of that source and method. So if I could finish --

Mr. Gowdy. In what, like a FISA -- hang on a second. Let me ask my question. Let me ask my question.

Mr. Strzok. You asked a question about the path. Can I finish that question or do you want to -- I would like to finish the answer.

Mr. Gowdy. If you can do it today, yeah, if you can do it today.

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely, Congressman. So the path was on the one hand that argument that we need to protect this source. Polling and all the pundits said it was a prohibitive favorite that Secretary Clinton would be the President. One option, as I said, was we protect that source and method, we don't put it at risk. We can afford to do

a slower counterintelligence investigation.

The counter argument, which I was making and which ultimately was decided by a variety of people in the Bureau, is we have to approach this investigation and do what the Bureau does. We need to investigate these allegations for a couple of reasons.

One, if then-candidate Trump wins the Presidency, the people that were allegedly or might be involved in that activity might be placed in significant national security positions, and we need to protect America by finding out whether or not these allegations are accurate or not and make sure that the government, President Trump in that case, was making special -- or making appropriate decisions.

Second, sir --

Mr. Gowdy. Agent Strzok, your 2 weeks --

Mr. Strzok. I'm almost done. I'm almost done, sir.

Second, that candidate Trump and the American people would expect us to do that. If there's an allegation, he, of all people, but everybody would want to know: If this is going on in my campaign I want you to tell me about it.

And the third option, these allegations might be proven false. All those things were there, but my view that we need -- it doesn't matter what the polls say.

You're probably not going to die before you're 40. The fact of the matter is, you do things that are responsible even when they are unlikely. And so my advocacy in that context was for the Bureau to do what the Bureau does, to go out and responsibly investigate.

Mr. Gowdy. Yeah, I got that explanation. I guess I'm troubled by the part where you put the dash, that there's no way he gets elected, because it almost seems as if that was the path that was thrown out, that there's no way he gets elected, but we can't take the risk.

Because I don't see anything about sources and methods, and I don't see anything about risking sources and methods. What I see is: I want to believe the path you threw out for consideration in Andy's office, dash, that there's no way he gets elected, dash, but I'm afraid we can't take that risk. I see the word "elected." I don't see anything about sources and methods.

Mr. Goelman. Is there a question there, Congressman?

Mr. Gowdy. Yeah. What am I missing?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, you are misinterpreting that text. I read it. I know what I -- or I wrote it. I know what I meant.

Mr. Gowdy. Who is Andy?

Mr. Strzok. I am not going to get in on an unclassified text to a dissertation about the protection of sources and methods and the ways that we might do that and the weight. My statement was intended --

Mr. Gowdy. Agent Strzok --

Mr. Strzok. Sir, you wanted to know what you're missing, and I'm telling you what you're missing.

Mr. Gowdy. No, no, no. I do want an answer to the question. What I don't want you to do is sit there and regurgitate something that you have worked on for weeks and weeks and weeks. I want you to answer the question.

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, you have repeatedly and publicly talked about how you want to hear from Agent Strzok. It now appears that you don't want to hear his answers, you want to hear your questions and then cut off his answers so that he can't give them.

Mr. Gowdy. No, he's had plenty of time to answer whatever you prepped him to say. He's had plenty of time to do that. I just let him go into three different scenarios, none of which involved him possibly wanting to impact the Presidency or the election.

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, you and I are both former prosecutors and we know that you would never get away with this in court, cutting the witness off like this. If you want to hear him --

Mr. Gowdy. And good thing for us is we're not in court. That's the good thing for us.

Mr. Goelman. If you want to hear what he has to say, you're going to need to allow him to speak.

Mr. Gowdy. How are sources and methods going to be compromised? Were you anticipating a criminal trial?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my recollection of that text is, sources and methods, there is always a tension. It doesn't matter if it's a national security case, if you've got a snitch on a drug case, there's always a tension between a source. It could be a mope on the street, it could be a recruitment in the middle of Beijing somewhere.

There is always a concern that anything you do investigatively is going to somehow allow the person who gave you that information to be identified. And so in this case my concern was the investigation

might cause that source and method to be known and compromised.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, why don't we go 11 days forward and see if we can put a little clarity on this, whether or not you're talking about Trump or sources and methods.

Just went to a southern Virginia Walmart. I could smell the Trump support.

What did it smell like?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, that text is meant to convey my sense of how radically different, even within the State of Virginia where I live, that going from northern Virginia down to southern Virginia, how different the population was in their support for the Presidential candidates and congressional candidates.

Mr. Gowdy. Yeah, I get that, Agent Strzok. Unfortunately, that doesn't come anywhere near what you actually typed. I get that.

My question, to refresh your recollection, was, what did it smell like? You're the one who wrote that you could smell the Trump support. You didn't write anything about how northern Virginia is different from southern Virginia and how the politics may be different in the bluer parts of the State. That would have been great if you had actually written that. That's not what you wrote. You wrote: I can smell the Trump support.

And my question to you is, what did it smell like?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, that phrase was used as an analogy to describe what I saw is the vast demographic difference between the electorate in southern Virginia and northern Virginia.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Well --

Mr. Strzok. These are conversational private texts. These are not statements for the record. These are not any sort of process by which I was conveying my intent and meaning. This is a conversation done electronically.

Mr. Gowdy. So is it your --

Mr. Ratcliffe. Hold on, hold on, hold on.

Let me just clarify this for a second, based on what you just said there, Agent Strzok. Let's talk about these texts generally as they apply to Ms. Page.

You have described them as personal exchanges with a close confidante a number of times today, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I don't mean to embarrass you, but is Lisa Page someone that you do or at some point in time did love?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I was engaged at one point in time in an extramarital affair. As long as, you know, we're going there and you want to discuss that, I would -- I would tell you that and the use and exposure of that has been --

Mr. Ratcliffe. Look --

Mr. Strzok. Sir, you brought up, so you know what, if you want to discuss it then I would ask you give me the dignity of kind of telling you how I think about it.

I deeply regret the pain that all of these things have caused my family. I will always regret that. I regret those texts in the way

that they have done that harm and I would ask -- you know, I am happy to answer any work questions you have of me, but I would rather not continue to cause any pain to my family by, you know, going down this line of questioning.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Does that give you a chance to answer that completely?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, yes, thank you.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So what I'm trying to establish through all of that is, was Lisa Page someone that you cared about deeply at the time you were sending these messages?

Mr. Strzok. Lisa Page at that time was somebody I was engaged in an extramarital affair with.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. Well, she was a close confidante. I know that because you've said it three times.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, that's right.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And you also know that these text messages, fair to say that you thought you would never be sitting in a congressional hearing and these text messages would see the light of day?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. These were always intended to be private.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. To a confidante, someone that you were having an affair with and that you cared about.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So explain to me, how given that context, we shouldn't look at these text messages as your most honest and true expression of what you were thinking at the time that you wrote them.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I would tell you is they are a reflection of what I was thinking, and I would note they absolutely are also in the realm of personal belief, of personal opinion of the political process, and that I would tell you that and why that's important is because I continually guarded to ensure that none of my personal political beliefs ever influenced any act I took as an FBI agent.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Again --

Mr. Strzok. And, again, I feel like I have been asked this many times and I'm giving the same answer in response many times. But I can't, in light of the continued asking, drive home enough to you that that isn't who I am and that is not who the FBI is. I would not tolerate that in another agent any more than they would tolerate it in me. That just isn't who we are.

And so the use and the suggestion that that is there deeply undermines the institution of the FBI and what we do day in and day out.

Mr. Ratcliffe. But with all due respect, Agent Strzok, you're the one that's suggesting that. You just told us that these private text messages that you thought no one was ever going to see, that would never see the light of day, that you intended to only be seen by the person you were having an affair with were the truest and most honest expression of your thoughts, but you --

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, that's what you said. That is not what the witness said.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, all right --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, let's ask him. Let's ask him.

Are you more or less -- are you more likely or less likely to be candid and honest if you don't think anybody else is going to read it?

Mr. Strzok. I would -- I don't want to hypothesize. In general, private conversations, I think there's an expectation of an ability to speak candidly.

Mr. Gowdy. See, that's not tough. You're more likely to be candid if you don't think anybody else is going to read it, if you think it is private.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. Right. That was John's point.

So what did you mean by smell the Trump support?

Mr. Strzok. What I meant by that was my sense and being struck by the difference of the electorate between an area as small as northern and southern Virginia, that I was struck by the -- just the number and amount of Trump support.

Mr. Gowdy. And had you used the word "struck" that'd be an interesting answer. Had you gone into a conversation about political demographics, regional politics, that'd been an interesting answer. But that's not what you said. You said you could smell the Trump support.

Could you also smell Clinton support?

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Mr. Strzok. I haven't ever tried. Again, this is an allegory. I can envision 100 scenarios of ways in which a conversation might have unfolded.

I am telling you, in this case, in this instance, my use of that phrase was in the context of an analogy of how different the local population was.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

[1:21 p.m.]

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then, why not say, "I could see the Trump support"?

Mr. Strzok. That would have been an even more appropriate word. I'm not going to go back and defend the conversational selection of a particular word at any given point.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, you put "SMELL" in all caps. That took you a little time, didn't it?

Mr. Strzok. Not appreciably different than all lower case.

Mr. Gowdy. Certain intentionality when you put something in all caps, isn't it?

Mr. Strzok. I think it's to emphasize -- again, Congressman, I feel like we're repeating the same question --

Mr. Gowdy. I'm just waiting on the first answer. I agree we've gone over the question a couple of times. I'm waiting on the answer, what did it smell like?

Mr. Strzok. And I am telling you it did not smell like anything. My use of the word "smell" is in the context of an analogy to make the point that I was struck by the difference in the level of support between the northern Virginia and southern Virginia voters over a very small geographic region.

Mr. Gowdy. Do you think there are any Clinton or Stein or Johnson supporters that shop at Walmart?

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely.

Mr. Gowdy. Was there something about being at Walmart that

enabled you to smell the Trump support more than some other place?

Mr. Strzok. No. It was just the big, local store that I happened to be in.

Mr. Gowdy. All right. October 2016, were you part of any affidavits in support of FISA warrants?

Mr. Strzok. I don't believe I can answer that question without getting into both classified information and ongoing investigations.

Mr. Gowdy. I think the existence of it has been declassified.

Mr. Strzok. That is true, but that's not what I just said.

Ms. Besse. Congressman, you asked him a question about FISA warrants. Are you asking about a specific one?

Mr. Gowdy. Yeah, the one in October of 2016, the one that's been declassified, about the only one we can talk about in public.

Ms. Besse. May I confer with the client?

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Besse. Congressman, portions of the warrant have been declassified, but the process itself for the FISA warrant have not been declassified. So --

Mr. Gowdy. I think the process is public. There's an affidavit in support of it. It's submitted to a court. I don't think any of that's classified. And I'm asking him whether or not he was part of the process.

Ms. Besse. In general terms it is not. The way you just phrased it --

Mr. Gowdy. Right.

Ms. Besse. -- it's not classified.

Mr. Gowdy. Right.

Ms. Besse. But to the extent that he can answer in an unclassified manner, he can answer. If he cannot, then I will instruct him not to answer in an unclassified setting.

Mr. Gowdy. I don't think it can be all that classified because there were emails and texts back and forth about providing extra information in support of the affidavit. I'm sure no Bureau lawyers or agents would be texting or emailing about FISA applications, given that.

Were you part of the preparation of an affidavit in support of a FISA application?

Ms. Besse. May we confer?

Mr. Gowdy. I don't think I've got a choice.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Besse. Congressman, the witness will answer to the best of his ability.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay.

Mr. Strzok. All right, sir. So following discussion with counsel, I can tell you that I was aware of the FISA application, but I did not participate in its -- what was your phrase? -- the preparation.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you consult with anyone who did help prepare it?

Mr. Strzok. I was aware of it and had --

Mr. Gowdy. See, I'm not sure what the word "aware" means.

Mr. Strzok. Again, I'm answering what I can, and I'm happy to answer in a classified setting in greater detail.

Mr. Gowdy. I don't think we need to go to a classified setting. Did you provide any information? Were you talking to folks who actually drafted the affidavit or were going to submit the application package?

Mr. Strzok. I did not provide information. I did speak with people who were preparing it.

Mr. Gowdy. And when was this preparation going on?

Mr. Strzok. That I can't get into in an unclassified setting.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, when was the application signed? What's the date of it?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that, sir.

Mr. Gowdy. Is it fair to say it's late October 2016?

Mr. Strzok. Again, sir, I'd need to check the record for that.

Mr. Gowdy. Would you disagree if I represented it was late October 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I would not.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, on October the 19th you said, "I'm riled up. Trump is a fucking idiot, is unable to provide a coherent answer." This would be about the same time there was preparation going on for a FISA application.

What did you mean by "Trump is a fucking idiot"?

Mr. Strzok. As I recall, without looking at the calendar of what was going on, I believe that was in the context of a debate, but I'm

not certain about that.

Mr. Gowdy. What part of the debate made you think he was a fucking idiot?

Mr. Strzok. I couldn't tell you without going back in time. There was something that I was, from the plain reading of the text, didn't think his answer was an effective one.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, that's a little different to say somebody gave an ineffective answer.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Would it help if perhaps we put the text in the record? We've been doing this all day asking about text but he's not able to see the text.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, that's up to his lawyer.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I don't think it's up to his lawyer.

Mr. Gowdy. And you can show him what you want when it's your turn. When it's your turn you can show him what you want, but you're not going to do it on my time. He's got a lawyer. He's actually got a good one.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. So you would like to ask him questions about a document that you refuse to show him?

Mr. Gowdy. That's up to his lawyer. He's the one that wrote it.

Look, as much as you want to represent this witness, he actually has a lawyer. Let his lawyer do the job. If he wants time to look at a text, he's welcome to ask for it.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Sir, it is common practice of our committees, our committees that we have participated on together for many years, to show a witness a document that we are asking that witness

about and mark it as an exhibit for the record.

That is not my interest or willingness or any participation in the representation of the witness. That is just a common practice of our committee.

Mr. Gowdy. Okay. Are you through?

"Trump is a fucking idiot, is unable to provide a coherent answer." And your response was that he must have said something ineffective during a debate. And my question was, do you agree there's a difference between an ineffective answer and a someone being a fucking idiot?

Mr. Strzok. What's the date of the text, sir?

Mr. Goelman. For the record, I'm showing the witness a printout of the text, I think, that we got from -- Senator Johnson posted it on the internet -- and directed the witness' attention to text dated October 20, 2016.

Mr. Strzok. Yeah. So, sir, my read of this and from the surrounding text, it is apparent that I'm watching the debates and there was some answer that I was responding to.

BY MR. BAKER:

Q I just have a very general question about the text.

A Yes.

Q You've stated a few times -- more than a few times -- that these were conversations believed to be in private between you and Ms. Page.

Was there a belief at the FBI or a belief between you and Ms. Page

that these texts were -- texts in general -- were somehow not stored or recorded or retrievable by the FBI?

A My understanding was that they are both stored and retrievable, that nevertheless, because there is de minimus use allowed by the text, that there is an expectation certainly of being monitored, but also that they were -- they had a level of privacy attached to them.

Q But not a belief that technology-wise they were physically not able to be retrieved?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Thank you.

BY MR. PARMITER:

Q Afternoon, sir.

A Afternoon.

Q Can I just clarify one thing? A little while ago you spoke with Chairman Gowdy about the text about the path you threw out in Andy's office. For purposes of that text, you were speaking about Andy --

A McCabe.

Q Okay. And at the time he was in what position?

A Deputy director.

Q Okay.

Going back to something you were asked earlier today pertaining to the Russia investigation, do you know who conducted an interview of Michael Flynn?

A I do.

Q And who conducted the interview?

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

A Can I confer with counsel?

Q Sure.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Strzok. Okay. So I can do this. And, Cecilia, if you want to hop in.

I am aware of who conducted that interview. Because it's an ongoing investigation, agency counsel has instructed me not to get into the details of that.

Ms. Besse. One, we are not -- it's the -- it is an aspect of a special counsel investigation. And also if it involves any employees who are not at the SES level, we are not going to allow the witness to give the names of those employees.

Mr. Baker. So it's fair to say the individual is not at the SES level?

Ms. Besse. It is possible the individual is not at the SES level.

Mr. Parmiter. So it's been widely reported that during the interview -- and you may or may not be able to answer this -- that the interviewing agents believed that Mr. Flynn had testified truthfully. Did you share that view at the time?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that I can answer a question about an ongoing investigation.

Ms. Besse. Again, because you're asking about his sort of interpretation based on being an agent involved in that investigation, he will not be able to respond to that question because it is under the special counsel's purview.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

BY MR. PARMITER:

Q Okay. Well, in the short time we have remaining, let me just ask you a couple other questions.

Are you aware whether the current President has ever been caught on surveillance or the target of surveillance? I mean, I guess, as the former deputy assistant director for counterintelligence, would that be something you would be aware of?

A I would be aware of some aspects of sensitive sources and methods and collection and who may or may not be on there. But I similarly would not be aware of all by any -- not even close.

Q So in response to the question about the current President?

A I can't answer that question in this setting.

Q Okay. Did you ever, as deputy assistant director for counterintelligence, sort of put out a call or request that different FBI units ensure you were looped in whenever such a thing might have occurred, whether it's the President or senior White House officials?

A Again, I don't think I can answer that question in this setting.

Q So let me go back to something you talked about with Chairman Gowdy about the text referring to this matters, when "MATTERS" was in all capitals. Understanding that your response to that was that this is classified, we talked -- you talked a little bit about the mishandling of classified information versus Russian interference and the two investigations looking at them side by side.

Would you say that your response to that question indicated the

mishandling part was somehow less important than the Russian interference part?

A I think the analogy that I tried to do is take any individual or country out of it, so setting aside just, say, a hostile foreign nation compared to the mishandling of classified information.

All FBI investigations are important. They all matter. If we open them, we have a duty to pursue the facts where they lay and bring them to a conclusion.

My statement, as I recall it, and certainly what I'm thinking now, is that when you -- is certainly me, from my perspective and expertise, that I think an objective observer -- look at the impact to national security of a mishandling case compared to the impact on national security of a hostile foreign nation potentially allegedly colluding with members of the candidacy for the Presidency of the United States, those are objectively demonstrably different impacts on -- potentially different impacts on the national security of the United States.

Q Would the number of classified emails be relevant in that consideration?

A Yes.

Q How many classified emails did the Bureau find on the Clinton server?

A I'd have to refresh my recollection. At this time, I -- you know, we count them in threads. I would have to refresh my recollection with the documents in the case file.

Q Okay. Would you disagree if I said it was 2,000 emails at

varying levels of classification?

A My recollection is that -- the difficulty in counting individual emails is that we tended to go by threads, because you would see various appearance of threads that, you know, there were two, then three, then four emails.

And so if that thread was repeated in each of those forms, you could individually count those and come up with a very large number when, in fact, there had been one email at the beginning that was classified or in the middle that then got forwarded back and forth between a bunch of people.

So I don't know the answer to the individual emails, and I think trying to count individually is a little bit misleading because it overcounts potentially that.

But I would, you know, if you're telling me that is absolutely your representation, then I'll accept that.

Mr. Parmiter. I think our time is up. Thank you.

Mr. Breitenbach. I think we'll take a break for lunch now.

[Recess.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q We are back on the record. The time is 2:46.

Mr. Strzok, this round is for the Democrats to question you.

I would like to ask you some general questions about the FBI's investigative techniques. Have you ever been involved in any investigations where the FBI did not follow with established protocols on the use of human informants?

A No.

Q So a human informant wouldn't be sent into a certain network by the FBI and then told to report back to the FBI?

A Explain that question more.

Q Would the FBI ever just dispatch a human informant into a certain pre-established network with the goal of entrapping people from within that network?

A No, not for the purpose of entrapment.

Q And does FBI ever conduct investigations to frame U.S. citizens for crimes they did not commit?

A No.

Q Does the FBI conduct investigations to entrap U.S. citizens?

A No.

Q Are you aware of any instance where the FBI and DOJ used politically biased unverified sources in order to obtain a FISA warrant?

A No.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Q Have you ever made a decision on the Trump investigation on your own?

A No.

Q Are you aware of any --

A Let me back up. I don't -- I would not characterize it as either confirming or not confirming whether or not there is an investigation towards President Trump. It's safe to say I have not made investigative decisions on my own that I can recall in any case.

Q Sure. And let me restate it. Thank you for the precision. I am discussing the investigation into collusion with Russia that Director Comey publicly acknowledged in March 2017. So, consistent with your general experience, you did not make any investigative decisions in that case by yourself without --

A Correct.

Q -- going through the proper investigative channels.

Okay. Are you aware of any instances where the FBI and DOJ manufactured evidence in order to obtain a FISA warrant?

A No.

Q Are you aware of the FISA court ever approving a FBI or DOJ warrant that was not based on credible and sufficient evidence?

A No.

Q Are you aware of any instances at the FBI or DOJ opening an investigation failing to follow all proper protocols to obtain a FISA warrant?

A I am generally aware that there are inspection processes.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

There may have been cases in the past where people -- again, you know, whether it was a Woods file that lacked sufficient documentation, but those are more administrative findings, and I don't have any specific recollection.

Q Have you been a part of any investigation where the FBI and DOJ did not follow the proper procedures to obtain a FISA warrant?

A No.

Q Have you been a part of any attempts by the FBI and DOJ to intentionally mislead FISA court judges in an application for a FISA warrant?

A No.

Q And that includes by omitting evidence or manufacturing evidence?

A Correct.

Q Can you explain briefly what the Five Eyes alliance is?

A So sure. The Five Eyes refers to the countries of the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K. It is an intelligence-sharing arrangement that is much more open and robust by the nature of kind of common shared Western democratic values and strategic interests.

Q And despite the shared nature of that five-country forum, we do, in fact, maintain bilateral information-sharing relationships outside of the formal Five Eyes relationship, right?

A Correct.

Q And those would all be proper channels through which to

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

receive intelligence from a foreign country?

A Yes.

Q Thank you. If you could -- if we could jump quickly to the initiation of the Midyear Exam.

I understand that the IC IG referred this matter to the FBI. Is that correct?

A Yes, that's correct.

Q And do you recall what the IC IG gave the FBI in terms of evidence and information?

A I don't recall. That was -- I joined the investigation after it was underway.

Q At the inspector general's hearing before our committees on June 19th, 2018, Mr. Meadows said about the IC IG, quote: They were so concerned that there might have been foreign infiltration into Secretary Clinton's server that they went immediately to the FBI to let them know about that.

He also says that the IC IG himself indicated that he went literally that day to the FBI because he was really -- quote, really concerned that there were some anomalies in the metadata that would suggest that a foreign actor was getting copies of potential emails.

Mr. Meadows then asked the DOJ's inspector general whether it was, quote, curious that FBI investigators did not talk to the IC IG about the allegation on anomalies of metadata before closing out the Clinton investigation.

Did the IC IG say anything to you about anomalies of metadata?

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

A I don't recall any discussion about anomalies in metadata.

Q And does the FBI typically investigate matters referred from an IG office jointly with that IG's office, or does the FBI conduct its own independent investigation?

A My experience is that it varies depending on the nature of allegation, the nature of the IG involved.

Q And in this case, did you investigate in tandem with the IC IG, or did you conduct an independent investigation?

A We did. We conducted an independent investigation. We had recurring coordination with the IC IG. They were great partners, but it was an independent FBI investigation.

Q Great. Thank you. Does the FBI place spies in U.S. political campaigns?

A We do not.

Q Are you aware of any information that would substantiate the claim that the DOJ is, quote, out to frame Donald Trump?

A I am not aware of any information to that effect.

Q And has the FBI or DOJ ever investigated the Trump campaign or the Trump Presidency for political purposes?

A Certainly not for political purposes, and I am not, by that answer, implying that there is or is not any other lawful predicated investigation.

Q In your career at the FBI, have you ever witnessed any investigative personnel letting their personal political views influence in any way their official actions?

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

A No.

Q Are you aware of any instances where Lisa Page made a professional judgment or took an official action due to her personal political views?

A No.

Q Are you aware of any instances where Lisa Page made a professional judgment or took an official action in the Clinton investigation due to her personal political views?

A No.

Q Would you say that you are the authoritative source on the interpretation of what your intent was behind a text message?

A I would.

Q And given that you are the authoritative source on your intent behind a text message, do people continue to interpret your texts in a way different from your stated intent in sending that text?

A I believe they do.

Q They do. Yes. When you were texting with Lisa Page, were those texts supposed to be official communications, that is, between the lead agent on the Clinton case and the special counsel to Andrew McCabe?

A No.

Q So they were intended to be personal communications?

A Yes. Yes, personally, in the conversational type of way, they were not, you know, kind of any official sort of communication back and forth.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Q Do you acknowledge that it was a mistake to engage in personal communications on your work device?

A I deeply regret those texts and the way that they have come out and certainly the harm to my family and in the personal way that they have been used. And I -- I say that, and I would draw a distinction between there is an allowance for personal use in the text messages by the FBI, so I think that that is how I think of that.

Q Okay. Thank you.

I think we can now turn to discussing some of the specific text messages that have been the subject of some discussion today.

Ms. Kim. I would like to introduce the following document as exhibit 1. We will mark it as exhibit 1.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q It's the March 3rd, 2016, text exchange. Here is the numbered copy.

So, Mr. Strzok, this exchange shows you and Ms. Page discussing Donald Trump over the course of 2 hours on the evening of Thursday, March 3rd, 2016. On this evening, FOX News hosted a Presidential primary debate with the four remaining candidates. Was the Trump/Russian investigation open at this time?

A The investigation announced by Director Comey into allegations of Russian collusion with members of the Trump campaign was not open.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Q Did you watch the Presidential primary debate?

A I believe I watched the debate. If this was a primary debate, I watched it that night.

Q And do you know if Lisa Page was watching this debate?

A I don't know. I mean, I don't know if that's inferred from some of the texts in here. I haven't gone through it.

Q Sure.

A It appears that she was watching it.

Q Thank you.

Ms. Kim. I'm going to introduce another document. It's -- we'll mark it exhibit 2.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q It's a March 4th, 2016, CNN article entitled "Republican Debate Turns Dirty."

So I will read aloud from it. I'd like to direct you to the second paragraph of the article. It reads, quote: Donald Trump opened the GOP debate here by boasting about the size of his genitals. He responded to recent comments from Marco Rubio in which the Florida Senator joked about the size of Trump's hands and said, "You know what they say about men with small hands." On the debate stage, Trump stretched his hands out for the audience to see, then insisted the suggestion that, quote, "something else must be small," unquote, was false. Quote, "I guarantee you there's no problem," unquote, Trump

said to howls from the audience at the FOX debate.

Do you remember this moment from the debate?

A I do.

Q And do you remember what your reaction was to Trump's statement about the size of his genitals?

A I was appalled that that sort of conversation was going on amongst candidates for the nomination for President of the United States.

Q Did you believe the subject was appropriate for a Presidential debate?

A I did not.

Q So, with that context in mind, let's return to exhibit 1, your text messages this day. The fourth message down, it's from Ms. Page. It reads, quote: God, Trump is a loathsome human.

The time stamp is in GMT, but if we translate that into Eastern time, that is 9:10 p.m. Eastern. Do you recall, again, whether Ms. Page was watching this debate?

A I don't recall. I'm inferring from her later comments that she was.

Q And do you understand her comment that Trump is, quote, loathsome to be a response to this debate performance?

A I do.

Q In fact, Donald Trump also stated during that debate, quote: Department of environmental protection, we are going to get rid of it in almost every form. We are going have little tidbits left, but we

are going to take a tremendous amount out.

If we return to the text messages, there is a text from you -- I want to say just around the halfway point, 02:20:04, on Friday. It reads: OMG, he's an idiot.

And 2 minutes after that text, if you go down about four texts, it says: Department of environmental protection, question mark, exclamation point, question mark, exclamation point.

And then the next text says: God, Hillary should win 100 million to zero.

Do you remember if this was a response to Trump's statement in the Republican Presidential debate about the department of environmental protection?

A My sense of that text, looking now, is that it was meant to convey my disappointment in the quality of the debate and some of the candidates that were before the Republican ticket and that my assessment of their statements of the crude, crass nature that I was -- I was surprised and disappointed.

Q To the best of your knowledge, does the Federal Government have a department of environmental protection?

A Not that I'm aware of.

Q So, when you were calling him an idiot and then typed "department of environmental protection," question mark, exclamation point, 2 minutes later, were you making the point that Donald Trump was promising in a nationally televised Presidential primary debate to cut a Federal department that does not exist?

A That is a reasonable inference of what I was thinking at the time, yes.

Q So, again, your next text 2 minutes after the one about the department of environmental protection states, quote: God, Hillary should win 100 million to zero.

In this text, were you stating a literal opinion that no one in the country should vote for Donald Trump?

A No.

Q Were you stating your intention to help Hillary Clinton win the general election through your professional deeds?

A No.

Q What did you mean by this text?

A It was my personal opinion, based on my viewing of the debate, that it did not seem like a compelling candidate was coming out of the Republican primary.

Q Earlier on this day, on March 3rd, 2016, two Republican Presidential nominees, the ones from 2008 and 2012, also publicly denounced Donald Trump.

I will represent to you that Mitt Romney called Donald Trump, quote, a fraud, and, quote, a phony who would drive the country to the point of collapse.

He also said, quote: He is playing the American public for suckers. He has neither the temperament nor the judgment to be President.

As soon as he was done with that speech, Senator John McCain

endorsed Mr. Romney's statements and said that Mr. Trump had made, quote, dangerous pronouncements on national security.

It seems clear to me that both Governor Romney and Senator McCain had some anti-Trump things to say on March 3rd, 2016. Do you have any reason to believe that Mitt Romney has a deep anti-Republican bias?

A No.

Q Do you have any reason to believe that John McCain has an anti-Republican bias?

A No.

Q Thank you.

Ms. Kim. I would like to introduce my next exhibit. It will be marked exhibit 3. It is a May 3rd, 2016 -- no, sorry. Strike that, please. The document I will introduce as exhibit 3 is a July 2016 text exchange. July 21st, 2016.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q Mr. Strzok, I will direct you to a text from Ms. Page. It's about eight texts down from the top. It's where she is emailing you an article link with a title "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack" with her personal comment, quote: This is really shocking.

Do you remember this text?

A Reading it in retrospect, I do, but not before refreshing my recollection.

Q And do you remember reading the article that Ms. Page sent to you?

A Vaguely. I believe I read it. I could not tell you right now what it said. I recall generally the context that it was questioning the NATO alliance and those terms under which we would -- we, the United States, might respond to an attack.

Q Now, you're a national security expert. How important is the NATO alliance?

A I don't know if I'd -- well, I don't know that I'd call myself a national security expert, but certainly, I think, based on my training and experience both in school and the military and the FBI, the NATO alliance is extraordinarily important for a number of reasons, both from a defense perspective, politically for Western democracies.

Q In your view, would it be a major diplomatic shift for the United States to set conditions for defending NATO allies against attack?

A I think it would be very significant to certainly change any understanding that existed and form the basis of a set of deterrents and conditions amongst the NATO allies in Europe.

Q Around 10 minutes after Ms. Page sent you this article, Ms. Page texts you another link to an article. I will direct you to that one. It is the text that starts: This campaign is like watching a train wreck happen over and over and over again.

The article is entitled "How Donald Trump Picked His Running Mate."

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Ms. Kim. I'll introduce that as exhibit 4.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 4

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q I'll direct you to the end of the first paragraph. It's describing a call that Donald Trump, Jr., made to a senior adviser to Governor John Kasich of Ohio.

A If I can interrupt you. I think I've gotten the exhibit talking about the NATO Defense article in your attempts --

Q I see. My apologies. Well, let me read aloud from this article to you.

A Okay.

Q And I'll strike exhibit 4. Exhibit 4 has not been introduced.

Quote: Donald, Jr., wanted to make the senior adviser of Mr. Kasich's an offer nonetheless. Did Mr. Kasich have any interest in being the most powerful Vice President in history? When Mr. Kasich's adviser asked how this would be the case, Donald, Jr., explained that his father's Vice President would be in charge of domestic and foreign policy. Then what, the adviser asked, would Trump be in charge of? Quote, making America great again, unquote, was the casual reply.

Do you think you read this article when Ms. Page sent it to you?

A I'm sure I read the NATO article. I believe I read the running mate article.

Q Are you generally familiar with the way that Presidents and

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Vice Presidents, again, very generally, divide their job duties?

A Generally, yes.

Q Did it concern you that Donald Trump, Jr., was offering Vice Presidential candidates the portfolio of, quote, domestic and foreign policy so the President can focus on, quote, making America great again?

A It did.

Q Why did that concern you?

A How the -- my view and -- of the Presidency is he is the chief executive of the United States. He is responsible for the national security of the United States, and there is nothing more important to the chief executive's role than the security of our Nation. And so the notion that anybody would abrogate that most important of roles to his number two struck me as inappropriate, unusual, and irresponsible.

Q Great. Thank you. So, with that context in mind, let's turn back to exhibit 3, which is your text with Ms. Page from that day. So, after she emailed you these two -- after she texted you these two articles, you texted back, quote: Trump is a disaster. I have no idea how destabilizing his Presidency would be.

What did you mean by this text?

A Looking at it now -- and my recollection is very much in the context of the NATO comments and not -- although I do remember the article about the Presidency and Vice Presidential roles. My concern, certainly from my military experience, from my education experience, is that the vitality, the critical nature of the NATO alliance and the

way that that plays not only with regard to the stability of the European Union but the back and forth between the various countries and powers in Europe potentially vis-à-vis Russia is of extraordinary importance and something historically we have had for decades and decades and decades, and that anybody that would come in and so quickly throw fundamentally radical and untested and unchartered ideas out potentially presented a significant destabilizing force on the kind of geopolitical realities of the United States.

But, again, this is my personal opinion, this is my personal belief about how I saw the political environment at the time. It is not at all related to anything which bears on my official duties.

Q Got it. So, from your personal perspective, when you were commenting that his Presidency could be, quote, destabilizing, can you explain for me one more time what you meant would be destabilized?

A Sure. Looking at in the context of these articles, I believe my statement meant at the time that it was destabilizing from the potential impact on our NATO allies and the leadership role that the United States has historically held in the free world.

Q Thank you.

Ms. Kim. I would like to move on to the text message about you protecting our country, quote, at many levels. I will introduce that as exhibit 4.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q This is a two-sided exhibit. I just want to let you know. So, Mr. Strzok, this is a series of texts from August 6th, 2016, where you appear to be discussing whether you will be getting a promotion. I'd like to instruct you to start reading on the first page around halfway down, starting with the text, quote: And that's weighing on me much more than I want to admit to you.

It's about a little more than halfway down.

A Yes.

Q And then the next text says, quote: Getting, slash, not getting the job, comma, not advising Bill.

So were you up for promotion in this time period?

A I was.

Q And what promotion were you up for?

A To Deputy Assistant Director.

Q And what was the process like for that promotion?

A It was, like most processes, there were a lot of very competent folks who would be qualified for the job. I had started as section chief not long before that in the early, early in the year, so I was somewhat junior, tenurewise, and I was -- I was torn. I mean, there are a variety of factors that go into deciding whether or not to apply for a job, and this is a reflection of that kind of internal deliberation that I was engaged in.

Q Got it. I think you elaborated a little bit about the process. Three texts from the bottom of this page, you say: I know. And as it stands, I'm going to have (and already do) a pretty tough

time with it. Five months, Lisa. Out of 19 years, 5 months because Giacalone was too busy interviewing to be there to SES board it earlier. There was literally no difference in what I was doing day to day.

What did that text mean?

A As I recall, this text involved some -- there was some discussion or consideration, appropriately, about tenure and the amount of time you had spent in any given job. My recollection of this is that when I was initially selected to be the section chief of the espionage section, that that occurred, that board, that official personnel action, occurred later because people who they're scheduling and whether or not they were present or not present caused that to be delayed.

And so my point was: I was doing this job. I had been doing that job, but the official naming of the position, which I eventually got, was several months delayed based on personnel availability. For this reading, it was -- you know, Mr. Giacalone was not available, but my concern that, while I had been doing the same job throughout this entire period of time, the de facto date of my promotion was later than it otherwise might have been.

Q I see. So, if you turn to the other side of the exhibit, Ms. Page texts back: And maybe you're meant to stay where you are because you're meant to protect the country from that menace.

A Yes.

Q She then sent you a link to a New York Times op-ed.

A Yes.

Q Was the menace, in your understanding, Donald Trump?

A No. I think, as I mentioned or answered earlier, the menace that I saw was primarily the interference of the Government of Russia in the Presidential elections for the Presidency -- or that's redundant, for the Presidency of the United States. It was certainly true that that -- the allegations at that time were that they were colluding or may be colluding with members of Trump campaign. So I see menace broadly primarily in the context of Russia, but certainly in the context that they were allegedly colluding with members of the Trump campaign. That was the -- that was how I saw it. But it was primarily, as it has been my whole career, protecting America from foreign threats.

Q Did you understand Ms. Page to be advocating for you to secretly scheme to prevent Donald Trump from becoming President?

A No.

Q And did you in fact scheme to prevent Donald Trump from becoming President?

A No.

Q The next text you wrote, quote: Thanks. It's absolutely true that we're both very fortunate. And of course I'll try and approach it that way. I just know it will be tough at times. I can protect our country at many levels, not sure if that helps.

So, given that you were talking about the promotion that you were hoping to be getting, what did you mean by "many levels"?

A I meant that whatever level I held in my job, that, you know,

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clearly I had put in for the position; I wanted to get it; I was not certain that I would; and this is, in a way, me -- you know, her saying, "Hey, look, you have a great job whatever level you are at," and my trying to, you know, say to myself, yes, that's true: Whether I'm a section chief, whether I'm a Deputy Assistant Director, I am blessed to be in the FBI protecting America, and so that whether I am doing that as a section chief specific to espionage investigations, whether I am doing that as a Deputy Assistant Director, that those many levels, those different levels, I can still make a significant contribution to national security.

Q In fact, the next text from Ms. Page reads, quote: I know it will too. But it's just a job. It's not a reflection of your worth or quality or smarts.

Do you think that is also contextual support for the fact that you were talking about the promotion that you could get or the job that you currently held?

A Yes, that's entirely it.

Q Great. During this exchange, Ms. Page also texted you an article from The New York Times about Captain Khan's family.

Did you read that article?

A I did. I may have already read it.

Q So, later on this page, Ms. Page wrote, quote: Trump should go F himself.

A I don't see that.

Q No, it's not in there. I'm sorry. I can represent to you

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that that is the next text in the series.

A All right.

Q When you -- when Ms. Page texts you the article about Captain Khan's family and then wrote, quote, "Trump should go F himself," did you understand her to be expressing her anger at Mr. Trump's treatment of Mr. Khan's family?

A I did.

Q And when you wrote, "God, that's a great article. Thanks for sharing. And F Trump," was that also your reaction -- were you expressing your personal view?

A I was. That was my personal view about the statements he had made about the Khan family.

Q Thank you. Ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Mr. Strzok, let me thank you for your patience. I understand that there was ongoing questioning and quite a bit of intensity. So let me just again thank you for your service.

I want to focus on -- I want to focus on an exhibit, exhibit 6, dated August 15, 2016, text message regarding insurance policy.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 6

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. Jackson Lee. In this August 15, 2016, text message to Ms. Page, you wrote, quote: I want to believe the path you threw out for consideration in Andy's office -- that there's no way he gets elected -- but I'm afraid we can't take that risk. It's like an insurance policy in the unlikely event you die before you're 40.

Do you recall the meeting you referenced in Andy's office who was present?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Is that -- is it because there were a lot of people or why?

Mr. Strzok. It depended. You know, it was -- when I attended meetings on the 7th floor, the Director is kind of down to one end in his office suite. The Deputy's office is in the middle. It would sometimes happen -- and Andy has a large conference room -- it would sometimes happen that we would meet with the Deputy Director.

I think, in this instance, if I recall correctly from calendar-type things, we may have briefed the Director and that sometimes, following those meetings, we would kind of retire to the Deputy's office to get out of the Director's hair and office space and continue a more granular discussion there.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And so, in that meeting, where you moved from place to place or office to office, were there a lot of people, or are there any names that you can recall?

Mr. Strzok. No. So my -- I am assuming this, and I could be very wrong with all of them, but people who were typically involved in the discussions of both -- well, in Midyear earlier, but in some of the Russia collusion investigations, if this was coming out of a briefing to the Director, typically those would include the Director, the general counsel, the Director's chief of staff, the Deputy Director, the Deputy Director's counsel, Ms. Page, the executive assistant

director, the assistant director, who's Bill Priestap, me, typically John Moffa, a colleague who we were partners throughout all of this.

So, following briefings to the Director, frequently, obviously, the Director would not continue, but his chief of staff, the general counsel might or might not then go to a follow-on discussion.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Thank you. What was discussed at the meeting and how to handle a variety of allegations -- let me just say, what was discussed at the meeting?

Mr. Strzok. So, Congresswoman, I don't recall all of the things that were discussed at that meeting without looking at some FBI material, and I don't know that it would shed light on this, but from the text, it is apparent to me that we had a discussion, given the information that we had received from an extremely sensitive source, which predicated the Russia collusion investigations, that there was a debate about how aggressively we wanted to investigate those allegations because the trouble is that frequently the more sensitive the source, the more likely the FBI doing something investigatively is likely to expose that source, and that could lead from anything to the source getting killed to fired to public embarrassment, and any number of bad things.

And so the debate, as I recall it, was, on the one hand, and my belief of what this text refers to, that there was one school of thought, of which Lisa was a member, saying the polls, everybody in America is saying Secretary Clinton is the prohibitive favorite to be the next President, and therefore, based on that, these allegations about the

Trump campaign, we don't need to risk that source. We can just take our time. We can run a traditional year's long counterintelligence operation, and we don't really need to worry because he's not going to be elected.

As I recall it, my response was I don't think that can be part of our decisionmaking. The FBI's job and responsibility to the American people is to investigate and that, if there are members of the Trump campaign who are actively illegally colluding with the Government of Russia, that's something the American people need to know, that's something candidate Trump potentially needs to know. And equally, if they aren't guilty of anything, that's also important.

So my statement there is: We can't consider -- we can't take into consideration the likelihood or unlikelihood of anybody's electoral process. We need to go, based on the gravity of this allegation, go investigate it and get to the bottom of it.

Ms. Jackson Lee. What status was the investigation at that point? The beginning? The middle?

Mr. Strzok. It was the beginning.

Ms. Jackson Lee. So you were discussing how aggressive to be in the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. That meeting might have been --

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am. And so -- and the point -- and the point, the analogy I am drawing is, you know, you're unlikely to die before you're 40, but nevertheless, many people buy life insurance.

The similarity is that, regardless of what the polls are saying, that Secretary Clinton is the favorite to win, however likely or not it is who's going to win, just like life insurance, you have to take into account any potential possibility. And it was simply -- it was simply: You need to do your job based on something, regardless of whether it's highly likely or not likely?

Ms. Jackson Lee. In the Congress, we say things like regular order. You needed to do what the FBI does when issues like this come before it. Is that what you're trying to say?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am, that, but also in the context of how -- how much risk and how aggressively you wanted to --

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me just say -- you just said "how aggressive." What would be the most aggressive course of action?

Mr. Strzok. I think the most aggressive course of action would be to go out and, you know, simply do very overt things, start talking to people and interviewing people. The trouble with that is -- there are many problems with that.

One, people don't frequently tell you the truth when you talk to them. A lot of things that you might find by doing some background information will allow you to conduct a far more effective interview, and certainly going out and doing that, people are immediately going to be aware that somebody told the FBI the nature of this predication information, which would be a considerable harm and cost potentially to that source.

Ms. Jackson Lee. I think you have answered this, but why would

that be considered aggressive?

Mr. Strzok. I -- the reason -- if what you're asking is why I thought we should be aggressive.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Or why would some of those actions be considered aggressive?

Mr. Strzok. Because they are -- they are things that are very -- they are risky, and they're precipitative. They cause things to -- you're kind of jumping to a final point without necessarily a lot of insurance of being successful and without having potentially a lot of the tools that you would be able to use.

You know, if I'm going to talk to you about your background, I can do it, but if I talk to all the staff members in here about your background, I'm going to know a lot more and do a better interview. So aggressive is go straight and interview you. Prudent would be to get other information, and there's a balance, obviously, in there.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Was there another option on the table besides that approach?

Mr. Strzok. There was. Yes. And so that was what I think some were advocating for that, you know, traditionally, because of how sensitive counterintelligence sources can be, the work in intelligence work can frequently be very fastidious, very cautious, very slow, and taking very deliberate steps to ensure that anything we might do can't be traced back to the reason we're doing it.

So that was an option. The problem with that is that frequently takes a long time, and so, because of that, you know, it might take

years. And so the question was, and the point of this is, hey, one side saying: Well, since Clinton is likely to be elected, we've got years. We can take years to figure it out.

And my point was: Maybe we do, but if Candidate Trump is elected, we have months, and we may find ourselves in a position where we have these allegations potentially about people who are being nominated for senior national security roles, and then we're in a really bad spot because we don't know whether these allegations are true or false; we don't know the extent of these allegations and the truth and how extensive or not.

So my advocacy was we need to pursue these cases in a way that will allow us to be responsible and protecting the national security of the United States.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me just quickly say the energy that you put behind this, if you were sworn, would you be able to say your analysis that you just made, the analysis that what if this individual became President and we had not been aggressive, could you, under oath, say that you are not motivated by bias?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Under oath?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. You can say that?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me ask this. So the option was a slower versus let's move forward to a certain extent?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let's return to your text then. You stated that it should be -- that: I'm afraid you can't take that risk. It's like an insurance policy in the unlikely event you die before you're 40.

Can you explain what you meant by that text?

Mr. Strzok. Yeah, absolutely. And so, in the context of what I just said about the path, my point there -- and there has been a tremendous amount read into this that is absolutely inaccurate. The point I was making there is, it is unlikely that you will die before you're 40, but you still act in a way that addresses that possibility.

That is an analogy to somebody saying, "Hey, look, every pollster and talking head thinks that Secretary Clinton is going to be elected, and my responding, "Well, that may be true, but nevertheless, we need to responsibly investigate this in the unlikely event, based on the polls and the pundits and the experts, that candidate Trump is elected."

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me quickly -- why did you advocate for continuing the investigation? Excuse me. Let me move to another question.

Did you mean that you had an insurance policy to prevent Trump from becoming President?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And would you -- you just said "no." Would you be willing to say that under oath?

Mr. Strzok. I would be.

Ms. Jackson Lee. In fact, you did have a potent way to affect his electoral chances going public with the investigation, right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Did you go public with the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Ms. Jackson Lee. But you didn't in fact leak the fact of this investigation?

Mr. Strzok. We did not. I did not.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Under oath, you would be able to say that you did not?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me again retract from putting the words in your mouth. Under oath, would you be able to say that you did not leak the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Okay. Let me just get a few points that I think are important as we sort of wrap in to the Clinton analysis here.

Is it fair to say that the -- and I'm not sure if I went over this, but I want to hear it again. Is it fair to say the Russian investigation is one with exceptional national security importance?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Ms. Jackson Lee. How did the Russia investigation's national security importance compare to the importance of potentially reviewing more emails in the Hillary Clinton investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Congresswoman, I think the best way -- the best way

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for me to explain to you is to take it out of the context of any particular individual or country because I think putting it in that terms leads to -- leads to a bunch of inferences that aren't helpful.

I would say objectively, on the one hand, if you have an allegation that any person has mishandled classified information, you need to look at what that information is and where it might have led to, but those are -- well, not frequent, those are the sorts of investigations in the Counterintelligence Division that are almost, not commonplace, but they are frequent.

And when you look at the damage those might cause national security -- and clearly they might cause damage -- they are nothing of the sort if you look at, not just any foreign nation, but a large super power hostile foreign nation who is involving itself in the election -- again, any election in the U.S. would be bad -- but in this context, the election for the President of the United States, those are extraordinarily different. They are both important. It is both important that the FBI follow through on all these investigations, but the damage to national security, the threat to national security is absolutely exponentially different.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And so -- and thank you. How frequently does the FBI investigate possible mishandling of classified information?

Mr. Strzok. Every day.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And how frequently does the FBI investigate possible collusion between a major party Presidential candidate and a hostile foreign policy?

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Mr. Strzok. This is the first time I'm aware of in history.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Let me finish as I yield to my good friends. Given the number of people who knew, if you had wanted to bury the laptop, would that have been possible?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that it would have been possible.

Ms. Jackson Lee. So can you put the delay in the context for us. Would a month be -- between the discovery of the laptop and seeking legal process be a significant delay in other cases?

Mr. Strzok. No. My experience is, in the context of a mishandling case, that a delay of weeks or even months, particularly when it comes to something like computer forensics, is not unusual. I have had computers and laptops get processed in 2 days, and I've had it take 3, 4 months, so a few weeks is not unusual at all.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Just in closing, you realize that the idea that no leak was made of the Trump issue and investigation, which is of great national security impact, and, however it was decided, pronouncement was made regarding the Clinton emails, would you view that as disparate treatment or would you understand the impact it would have in the midst of a Presidential election?

Mr. Strzok. I do. I believe -- understand the impact it had on the election, certainly to the extent anyone can understand that.

I would draw some issue with -- I think that disparate treatment was appropriate, given the nature of the investigations. One was a closed criminal matter. The other was a pending counterintelligence matter, so I see those as very different.

Director Comey, you know, admittedly, we even -- with closed criminal matters, we don't discuss that typically, but I think Director Comey has testified extensively as to his reasoning why the FBI did that, and I would defer to that record as to the reasoning, but I do -- I do see them as --

Ms. Jackson Lee. Did you then view the Clinton emails as a closed thoroughly investigated matter?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. And the resolution, you were comfortable with?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Jackson Lee. Thank you.

BY MS. KIM:

Q Mr. Strzok, there have been some questions asked about how much thought you put into your text messages, how accurately the text messages reflect your state of mind, so I would like to talk with you about how you draft text messages?

A Okay.

Q Would you say that you put a lot of thought into crafting and crystallizing your thoughts before you send a text message?

A No.

Q Do you do like a repeated drafting process to make sure you are being absolutely clear about what you mean?

A I do not. They are a written form of communication, conversation.

Q Would you consider text messages to be a form of perfect

verbal expression?

A No.

Q Or you know, the attitude that I generally take towards my text messages is flippancy. They're quick. They're easy to send. Would you also say that your text messages are flippantly composed?

A Sometimes, yes.

Q And that's a separate question from your honesty, is that not?

A Absolutely.

Q So you can both be totally honest and genuine in sending a text message and still craft it badly or not have it completely reflect your intent when you sent it. Is that right?

A Right.

Q Thank you. And then I'd like to dive back into going over your text messages again. So I think the next one we'll go to is the text message -- the one about whether Donald Trump would become President and whether we would stop it.

A Okay.

Q So I'm giving you a page from the inspector general's report. We don't have these text messages in the production copy.

A Yes. Okay.

Q So, on August 8th, 2016, Ms. Page reportedly texted to you, quote: He's not ever going to become President, right? Right? And you responded, quote: No, no, he's not. We'll stop it. Do you remember this text?

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A I don't. I do, thinking about it now. I am not saying I didn't write it, but at the time, I did not recall writing this.

Q And reading it today, do you understand Ms. Page to be asking you about your work on the investigation that Director Comey disclosed in March 2017?

A Not at all.

Q Do you take her comment as expressing her personal political fears that Donald Trump will become President?

A I do.

Q You wrote, quote: No, no, he's not. We'll stop it.

Did you mean that you intended to affect the outcome of the Presidential election through any official action?

A No.

Q Who is the "we" in that text message?

A Again, my sense is that writing that, this is reassuring something that, no, the American people will never elect him to be the President, and so the "we," whether that's the American people and whether that's the democratic process, it's simply not going to happen and don't worry about it. It's a personal sense of reassurance, not anything else.

Q And again, did you have the ability to affect the outcome of the Presidential election through a personal or professional action?

A Probably.

Q For example, you could have disclosed the existence of this probe, right?

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A Yes.

Q But you didn't. Is that correct?

A Correct.

Ms. Kim. You know, so much ink has been spilled on the secret society that I think I would like to touch on that, so I will introduce that text as exhibit 8.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 8

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q It's the November 3rd -- actually, exhibit 8 is a little bit before the secret society text. It's the November 3rd, 2016, text message.

So I would like to direct your attention to the 3rd text from the bottom of this page. On November 3, 2016, you wrote to Ms. Page: Shh, don't tell anyone.

A Okay. I have a different set. I have starting on November 8.

Q Starting on November 8. Let me show you my November 3rd copy.

A Okay.

Q On November 3rd, 2016 you wrote: Shh, don't tell anyone. Meeting invite. Thank you. Good job. Calendar handout.

Can you explain that text?

A Yes. I had -- and I had not recalled that text at all. I had purchased a set of -- every year, somebody in Russia puts out a

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Vladimir Putin calendar. Every month, there is a variety of photos of Vladimir Putin riding a horse or a bear or holding a child or a kitten or engaged in some military display of Russian patriotism, and as a kind of a morale building and thank you to the senior members of the Russian investigation, I got a series of these calendars to give out as sort of a thank you for doing a good job, for working extraordinarily hard because people had been working around the clock throughout the summer and fall.

Q Right.

Ms. Kim. I think I have a picture of that calendar. I'm going to introduce it as exhibit 8.

Mr. Strzok. 9, because we have 8?

Ms. Kim. Exhibit 9, pardon.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 9

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. KIM:

Q Is this the calendar that you intended to hand out?

A I believe this is one of the months from the calendar, yes.

Q And you said that it was intended as a morale boosting?

A Yeah, kind of a snarky joke gift of, you know, related to some of the absurdities of Russian patriotism and propaganda.

Q Got it. With that context, let's return to exhibit 8, which I believe I've already marked. It's the November 8th text. I think if you go to the sixth text from the bottom, Ms. Page wrote: Are you even going to give out your calendars? Seems kind of depressing.

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Maybe it should just be the first meeting of the secret society.

Mr. Strzok, is there a secret society at the FBI?

A Absolutely not.

Q Has there ever been a secret society that you've been aware of?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Did you understand Ms. Page's text to be suggesting that you start a secret society?

A No.

Q Do you think Ms. Page was just making a joke about whether you intended to hand out your Putin calendars?

A Yes.

Q I think we have about 4 minutes left. I'm sorry for jumping around.

A That's all right.

Q My slimmest set of questions deal with the opening of the Clinton investigation actually.

A Okay.

Q Was it the FBI's decision or the DOJ's decision to designate that case with an unknown subject or unsub?

A I don't know. That occurred before I began.

Q To your knowledge, did the unsub designation change the FBI's investigative decisions or strategies at all?

A No.

Q You discussed briefly what a headquarters special is. Did

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that staffing decision or that designation change the FBI's investigative decisions or strategies at all?

A No.

Q What's a sensitive investigative matter?

A A sensitive investigative matter, a SIM, I'd have to defer to the guidebook for the exact definition, but essentially it's anytime there's a particularly sensitive matter that's involved that might be a politician, a member of the media, a clergyman, or some kind of -- there are other categories, including a catchall, something that requires, by our regulations, a higher level of oversight and approval.

Q And does that designation change the FBI's substantive investigative decisions?

A No, except for the context with, you know, if you were going after a lawyer, a clergyman, a member of the media, there might be individual restrictions or regulations on obtaining records or doing certain investigative techniques, but broadly, investigative strategywise, no, it doesn't change it.

Q Who is George Toscas?

A George Toscas, I believe, was at the time, and maybe still, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the National Security Division of DOJ.

Q Is he a career prosecutor?

A He is.

Q In your experience, is Mr. Toscas an unbiased and independent prosecutor?

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A Yes.

Q Have you ever witnessed Mr. Toscas acting based on improper motives, such as political bias?

A No.

Q And where he disagreed with the FBI, were those disagreements based on legitimate legal differences?

A In my experience, yes.

Q Were they ever based on political differences?

A No.

Q Did any political appointee at the DOJ ever intervene or attempt to intervene in the Midyear investigation?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q Did any political appointee at DOJ issue orders on how to conduct the Midyear investigation?

A Not to my knowledge.

Ms. Kim. I think I'm fine ending the chapter -- this chapter here. I will see you again soon. Thank you. The time is 3:40.

[Recess.]

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[3:52 p.m.]

Mr. Baker. We'll go back on the record. And let the record reflect it is 3:52 p.m.

BY MR. BAKER:

Q I want to go back just a minute to a topic we've talked about earlier, certainly a topic that has also been in the media, the relationship you had with Ms. Page.

Prior to the texts becoming public, was the relationship, the improper part of the relationship, was that known in the Counterintelligence Division prior to the texts?

A I am not aware if it was or was not. I don't believe so.

Q So were you ever called in by any of your superiors and counseled or talked to about the matter, any concerns they had about it or that they'd heard about it or --

A Yeah, I don't want to get into a discussion about the relationship I had with Ms. Page or that discussion with others, because I think what I can tell you, maybe, if what you're asking is was, you know, anything inappropriate of that nature a decision point or anything like that, not to my recollection. But I'd rather stay away from discussion on --

Q Not even -- I'm asking not even whether it was a decision point in anything. As part of their official supervisory duties, your superior -- I believe you testified earlier, you answer -- as a DAD, you answer to an assistant director. Do you have a recollection of an assistant director, totally unrelated to any casework, calling you

in as a subordinate during any kind of official review or performance appraisal and mentioning that the relationship had been brought to their attention and just either admonishing you or letting you know about it or making any mention to you of it at all?

A Again, I think my preference would be not to get into a discussion about those sort of personnel-type matters. I'm happy to answer questions you have about my work and my work performance and what I did and didn't do, but I don't want to go down the path of talking about things that were unrelated to work decisions or work activities with regard to the extramarital affair.

Q Well, wouldn't it be a work activity if a superior is calling you in to ask you about some sort of conduct in the workplace?

A I see that as a separate and distinct issue. You've got a personnel issue or potentially anything that has to do with that, as opposed to what we're here today to discuss, which my understanding is my actions with regard to the Clinton investigation, the Russia investigations, and other work-type activity.

Q There's been talk about texts, texting. And there's been some emails that the committees have reviewed. What type or how many different platforms of communication did you engage with with Ms. Page?

A Well, I mean, it varied. So there were certainly -- there are the texts on the Bureau Samsungs. There were texts on personal iPhones that we had. We exchanged -- and this is -- you know, we exchanged Link messages, which are kind of an instant messaging application on our Secret side computers at work. We certainly talked

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on the phone, talked in person, emailed, both on -- and, again, this was work-type email -- the O side, Secret side, TS side.

Q You, as a DAD in the Counterintelligence Division, do you work in a SCIF? Is your office in a SCIF?

A Yes.

Q So, when you're doing texts, you were not in a SCIF.

A Correct.

Q Okay. Because you wouldn't be allowed to have a --

A Right.

Q -- personal communication device in one.

Did you use as a platform, with any frequency at all, any personally owned communication devices, any personal email accounts?

A We -- yes, both personal emails and, as I think I mentioned, personal iPhones.

Q Would you be willing to make the texts or contents of any of those personal communications available to the committee?

A I was asked by the IG to do it. I agreed to do it. I reviewed it, and there were not any still resident on my personal devices.

Mr. Goelman. Just to clarify, we were asked to provide any work-related communications on Special Agent Strzok's personal devices. And he reviewed and found that there weren't any, and we told the IG that.

We have not agreed, nor do we agree now, to open up all of Special Agent Strzok's personal communications on his personal devices to the committee or anybody.

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BY MR. BAKER:

Q What about the official communications on the personal devices that you made available or reviewed for the IG, would they be made available to the committee?

A My recollection is there were no official communications on any personal devices or personal emails that I had in my possession.

Mr. Breitenbach. Did you make that determination, whether they were personal or work-related?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. And there were -- you know, as a fact of the matter, following the -- at some point, I -- you know, it was related to personal reasons -- deleted all those. But they were the personal communications, not work ones.

Mr. Breitenbach. And, at any point, did the FBI, the IG, or any other investigator attempt to obtain legal process to obtain those personal communications?

Mr. Strzok. I am unaware of any.

Mr. Breitenbach. Thank you.

Mr. Baker. During any of the Midyear investigation meetings that you would have, when -- I assume at some point, and maybe I'm wrong, that there would be some discussion about possible charges. Often, in an investigation, you look at possible charges early on to figure what elements of a crime you might have to prove and adjust investigative strategy accordingly.

Was there discussions at any point about what possible charges could be levied based on the facts when the case was opened and then

as the case went on?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. I don't know -- again, I came in after the case opening, but, certainly, in this case, as is my experience in most cases, there was a discussion with the prosecutors about what charges might be there and the elements of the crime, the strength and weakness of the evidence, and applying the facts against the law.

BY MR. SOMERS:

Q At what point did those discussions, let's say, begin?

A I recall -- what typically -- and there are different sorts of discussions. So I recall probably fairly early on. And I could not tell you what or when those dates were.

But, you know, typically, you look at the set of facts that you have before you, the set of allegations, and you say, okay, what laws do we have that might apply to this and what are the elements of those laws. And so that's kind of the initial way, as you're trying to scope an investigation and understand what the various investigative avenues are.

That evolves over time. You become aware of new facts, which may give rise to looking at different laws or different statutes. You begin to understand where the evidence is, where the facts are, and where it's not.

And then, from that, you can begin -- and certainly this is largely a prosecutor-driven exercise -- begin to understand what charges are possible, likely, still unknown, or less likely.

So that -- it's a fluid process. It isn't a kind of --

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Q Is the fluid process, are those discussions, I mean, are there pure discussions of -- well, let's just back up for a second. Which statutes were discussed that you recall?

A I could not give you an entire list. Broadly, I remember discussions across the course of the investigation about statutes regarding mishandling of classified information, statutes involving obstruction, statutes involving false statements, statutes involving Federal Records Act and that act.

I am sure there are others, but, again, I would have to go back to, kind of, the case file and consult with the team and particularly the attorneys about what they were thinking of.

Q Are those discussions, are those, here's what evidence we're finding, how does that fit with the law? Or are they pure legal discussions of the Espionage Act requires X to be proved?

A I think those are the same. I look at those as very similar and connected, so I would say both.

I think the goal -- I mean, you're investigating -- in a criminal case, you're investigating to determine whether or not there's a violation of law. You're not just investigating to get info. So investigations are driven towards establishing whether or not a violation of law occurred.

In intel cases, it's different, obviously, but with this -- and then, certainly, from the standpoint of, you know, any computer intrusion-type statutes, whether we could show that or demonstrate that.

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But, to your question, both of those things are going on.

Q To the Clinton investigation, specifically servers --

A Yes.

Q -- because you differentiated between a counterintelligence, I believe, investigation and a criminal investigation in that last response.

A Yeah. And so the Clinton investigation, I think I laid out earlier, you know, kind of, the three primary goals of the investigation, of: Was there classified information, and how did it come to be there; who put it there, and what was their state of mind, and what was the reason it came to be placed there; and did a foreign adversary gain access to it.

That last one is very intelligence in nature. I mean, yeah, maybe you could prove a criminal violation of some sort of computer intrusion, but the goal from that is much more of an intelligence community damage assessment sort of perspective of, you know, did foreign power X get this; if so, what does that mean, what's the impact in terms of mitigating whatever -- if there was classified information, what we would have to do to mitigate and protect things.

Q These discussions of the legal standards, were these FBI? Were they all FBI-DOJ, or did you have FBI-FBI conversations about the legal standards?

A I'm sure we had both. These are predominantly attorney-driven conversations and predominantly DOJ attorney-driven conversations.

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So, you know, again, prosecutors make a decision about what statutes to charge or not charge. And they are the ones whose job primarily is to focus on the elements of crime, the sufficiency of the evidence, the paucity of evidence, and all the considerations that go into admissibility and credibility and everything like that.

So, you know, it is frequently my experience that those are largely attorney- and DOJ-driven discussions.

Q So did DOJ tell you what was legally required to prove gross negligence under the Espionage Act?

A I remember a lot of discussion about the gross negligence point, and it was -- I'm not an attorney. I remember the attorneys talking at length about that, because it's obviously relevant to one aspect of 793. It also was relevant based on its, you know, appearance or not in the speech that Director Comey gave. But the attorneys did discuss that at some length.

Mr. Baker. When you say attorneys, that would include Department of Justice attorneys and FBI attorneys?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

BY MR. SOMERS:

Q Do you recall attorneys telling you that intent was a required element of gross negligence?

A Well, it -- I don't recall with regard to the discussion of gross negligence. I do remember there's a problem -- and, again, I'm getting out and ahead of my nonlegal skis. One of the elements of 793 does not include an intent provision, and there was some legal question

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about that and the strength of that statute.

Q Were you ever told that any of the provisions in 793, that the Department would not charge under --

A I was never told the Department wouldn't charge something. I think the discussion was always in the context of what the historical record of using those statutes had been.

Q I'm going to ask you sort of a related question. Based on your investigation, what is your understanding of why Secretary Clinton used a private email server?

A What she told us -- and I believe this, I think -- is that she used it for personal convenience, that she was not a technical person, that she wanted one device where she could do work and personal things, and, if I recall correctly, that she had set up -- or somebody in the Clinton arena had set up that server during her Senate time or that she began using it in that time and she simply wanted that same convenience.

Q So there was a mix of emails on the server?

A Sure. That's correct, yes. What do you mean by mix?

Q Of all those categories you just described of --

A There were a variety of things in that server, including those categories of things that I described.

Q So the Clinton Foundation was on the server?

A I believe on one of the servers, if not others.

Q Were you given access to those emails as part of the investigation?

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A We were not. We did not have access. My recollection is that the access to those emails were based on consent that was negotiated between the Department of Justice attorneys and counsel for Clinton.

Q Didn't the FBI have possession of the server?

A Initially, no, and then we obtained possession of servers over time.

Q So, when you had possession of the servers, there was an agreement that you weren't able to look for Clinton Foundation emails on the server?

A The possession of those servers were based upon the negotiation of Department of Justice attorneys for consent. My understanding is, frequently -- you know, we wanted -- as an investigator, I want as much information as I can get. I don't want limitations. I don't want you to tell me a date range is off limits, a domain is off limits, anything is.

But the reality is, as you well know, we are constrained by the law. And I think there was a sense that, again, according to the attorneys, we lacked probable cause to get a search warrant for those servers and projected that either it would take a very long time and/or it would be impossible to get to the point where we could obtain probable cause to get a warrant, so they negotiated consent.

I think it's true, and somebody mentioned earlier that, you know, we were -- I was, but that the FBI team was certainly, I think, comparatively aggressive, which is my experience. Agents tend to be

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much more aggressive in trying to get information. Prosecutors look at it from a different set of perspectives.

But the answer is we had it voluntarily. We had it voluntarily in the context -- in the case of the servers, voluntarily in the context of a consent that was worked out between DOJ attorneys and counsel for Secretary Clinton.

Q So what does that mean in terms of a search of the servers, that it was a -- so you have access to the entire universe.

A Yes.

Q Does that mean, are we talking search terms? I mean, what was the --

A I would have to go back and check the file. It would include things like search terms. We had a significant filter team that was put in place to work through the various terms of the various consent agreements. And those could be -- and this is not an exclusive list -- limits of domains, of date ranges, of people. But that's not an exclusive list.

Q Did you --

BY MR. PARMITER:

Q Can I jump in just for a minute here and sort of drill down a little bit more on the specific statutes?

A Uh-huh.

Q Let me show you, first of all -- we're going to mark it as exhibit A for majority.

So this is 18 USC 793. One of my colleagues, or perhaps it was

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you, mentioned gross negligence before. I believe if you turn to page 2, you'll find that in 793(f).

A Yes.

Q So you had mentioned a little earlier that you thought there was a -- not an intent requirement in one of the statutes. Do you see an intent requirement in (f)1?

A Again, what I hesitate to do -- I am not an attorney, so when I --

Q Sir, I don't want your legal opinion. I'm just, like, wondering whether a plain reading of the statute indicates anything.

A My plain reading, understanding, and my historical recollection through application of this statute is that (f) does not contain a kind of scienter requirement.

Q Okay. At least not in (f)1.

A Correct.

Q (f)2 may, but --

A Yes.

Q -- (f)1 does not.

A Granted.

Q All right. Great.

So, in your experience, what's the definition of Secret material?

A Secret material, if I recall correctly, is material that, if disclosed without authorization, could reasonably be expected to cause serious damage to national security.

Q Great. What about Top Secret material?

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A Same definition but, I believe, exceptionally grave damage to national security.

Q All right.

So, as Secretary of State -- would it be reasonable to conclude that whoever the Secretary of State is has lawful possession of classified material?

A It depends on what the classified material is. I don't want to go down a technical rabbit hole, but, as you may know, it's not only clearance-level but need-to-know. I can envision scenarios where the Secretary of State might not have a need to know the details of some covert action program that didn't involve State.

But that's a long answer for a -- I don't agree exactly with how you worded the question, but --

Q Okay. But it would not be the case the Secretary of State is an office that never is in contact with classified material.

A Correct. Correct.

Q Okay. So would it be reasonable to assume that the classified material recovered by the FBI from Secretary Clinton's private server related to the national defense, given the definition of Secret material?

A The classified information, yes.

Q Okay. Would it be also reasonable to conclude that, by being on a private, unsecure server, that the information had been removed from its proper place?

A Yes.

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Q Okay.

What role did you play in drafting the Director's press statement?

A I was one of several individuals who reviewed it, edited it.

There was kind of a couple -- several kind of parallel tracks. One was kind of the case facts -- what we did, what we could say, assert, what we couldn't assert. There was a tremendous amount of legal back-and-forth about what was accurate, what was, you know, appropriate. And then just kind of a broader, how to effectively communicate what he was trying to say. But I was one of many people making edits to it.

Q At any point did the words "gross negligence" appear in the Director's statement?

A Yes, my recollection is that it did.

Q And when were those -- were those changed at some point?

A They were.

Q And what were they changed to?

A I believe "extremely careless" is the phrase that was used instead.

Q Do you recall the discussion surrounding that change or why it was deemed necessary and who was involved?

A I remember generally a discussion about that topic, amongst many other topics. My recollection is attorneys brought it up, and these, of course, were DOJ attorneys. And the discussion, as I recall it, was kind of getting into the nitty-gritty of how "gross negligence" is defined as a term of art in statute and whether or not that should

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be used. But it was the OGC, it was the legal folks, the Director, people who had, kind of, that legal experience turning that around.

Q Okay. Did you make that change, or did someone else do it?

A I believe it was done from my computer because I had the biggest office. And so my recollection is several of us sat down and made the first cut of taking 8, 9, 10 people's comments and putting it all into the first revision -- or a revision. And then, as I'm sure you've seen from production, there are about 80 billion subsequent revisions by a similar number of people.

BY MR. BREITENBACH:

Q Yeah. Just to continue down this line, who is making the call to the Director to recommend charges or not to charge Mrs. Clinton?

A I think that is ultimately the Director's call based on his receipt of the facts from us.

So I think the investigative team -- me, Jon, you know, Bill -- would sit there and say, kind of, here are all the things we're saying. The attorneys would sit and say -- you know, and attorneys from, kind of, line -- the line OGC attorneys up through Deputy General Counsel and General Counsel saying, "Here's how we think about these facts as they apply to the law," as well as, "In our discussions with DOJ, this is their historical way that they have applied the law against facts like these," and that, ultimately, the Director took into consideration all those things and kind of came to his conclusions.

Q But it sounds like you sort of left the statutory interpretation to the lawyers.

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A Well, I leave the interpretation and legal understanding of that to the attorneys. My experience, certainly, is that it is very, you know, confoundingly difficult sometimes to get DOJ excited and interested in prosecuting baseline mishandling of classified information cases. So the historical record of that -- and I'll defer to the FBI for whether or not we've got statutory gaps in mishandling of classified information or not. But those decisions, prosecution decisions, decisions of whether or not facts represent a violation of the law, are almost always done ultimately by the prosecutors.

Agents participate in those discussions. Agents are critical in the gathering of those facts, and frequently there's a partnership there. But that choice, that decision, that moving forward is a prosecutorial one.

Q But, in this case, it wasn't.

A Right.

Q It was Director Comey making the prosecutorial or nonprosecutorial decision.

A That's correct. And I believe, if I recall correctly, the Attorney General indicated that she would accept the FBI's recommendation of --

Q So is there a gap, do you think, as an agent, if your lawyers are telling you that a particular statute requires an element if there is another statute whose element is met by the evidence?

A I wouldn't call it a gap. My recollection and what I'm assuming, if what you're asking is whether or not the elements of 793(f)

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were met, that was --

Q No. No, actually, if your lawyers are only telling you one part of a statute, and you -- I think you indicated that you're relying on your lawyers to interpret the law as it exists for you as the agent --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- and your lawyers are failing to advise you that a particular part of the statute would meet the elements of the offense based on the evidence that you as the agent have collected, is that problematic, in your mind, that you're -- is that a gap, in your understanding? Or is that something that --

A I don't think that happens. So that hypothetical is not my experience, certainly in this case. I think you have different groups of attorneys. For instance, you have the DOJ attorneys who have their perspective. But we also have extraordinarily competent FBI attorneys who frequently will play the role of advocate for the agents. And agents have their experience in working cases that, hey, I remember we did it this time, why can't we do it now.

So, if that hypothetical were true, I might agree with you, but I don't think that's an accurate hypothetical.

Q Did you ask whether there was an element of the offense with regard to the mishandling statute that could have been met that did not include willfulness or knowledge that you're sending classified information?

A My recollection is we looked at the entirety of the -- you know, 794 was not even considered. But we looked at the entire body

of statutes which applied to the mishandling of classified information and had extensive discussions about it between prosecutors and the investigative team and then certainly among the senior management team of the FBI.

Q So, I guess, to drill down, did you understand that there was the possibility, if you had found evidence of mishandling of classified information, that there was an offense that did not include, as you mentioned, a scienter or an intent or willfulness statute?

A Yes. And, as was pointed out by multiple attorneys, the use of that statute has been extraordinarily rare in U.S. history. There has been occasionally use, as I recall, in UCMJ action. But it is both rare and, I believe, if I recall correctly, there have been some indications that it might be constitutionally defective because of lack of intent. And, as a result of that and other reasons, DOJ has used it exceedingly sparingly.

Q Well, it's never been held constitutionally defective, and it's still good law in the books, as you are aware?

A It is good law in the books. And what I'm telling you is, in the context of an analysis of that statute and applying it to the facts of this case, the attorneys were fairly unanimous that we did not bring a fact pattern like this -- we have not brought fact patterns like this to charges of that statute.

Q Okay.

Changing back to -- I know you're not interested in discussing any details of your relationship with Ms. Page, but I think it's

important for us to know the level of knowledge that the Department or the Bureau itself, Bureau management, had with regard to any indiscretions that may have occurred. Did they?

A I don't know what they did or didn't. I would tell you -- and I think why it's relevant that -- why I'm saying this isn't necessarily relevant is that my understanding of Bureau regulation is that, whatever morally you may think of an extramarital affair, it is not prohibited by Bureau regulation or policy.

Certainly, if somebody is in your chain of command, if there's any sort of impropriety, of favoritism, or things like that, it is. But simply an extramarital relationship is not.

So, to the extent it's not, it does not strike me as relevant to my work and --

Q Were you ever counseled on the affair?

A Again, I don't want to get into personnel counseling matters. I am happy to discuss my performance on work-related matters, but, again, as I said, this was not something that was at variance with FBI regulation, and I --

Q You know, I understand, and we're not going into any details. But I think it's important for us to understand, was there an awareness of your relationship when either or both were transferred from the Bureau, working on the MYE, to the special counsel investigation?

A And I'm telling you, I don't know the answer to how widely that was or was not known within the FBI. And I just don't -- having answered that a couple of times now, truly, I can't tell you -- I mean,

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outside of the setting and everything going on, this has been -- and the use and publicity of all this, extraordinarily painful and harmful and hurtful to my family. And I just don't want to continue engaging in that process. I think --

Q I understand. But was it known to anyone prior to you being transferred to the special counsel investigation?

A Again, I don't think that is relevant to my work performance, and I don't want to discuss that.

Q I understand you don't think it's relevant, but was it -- it's relevant to us, because we need to understand the level of culpability with respect to the potential of someone being transferred -- his, I believe, already went down this line of questioning.

When an affair has the potential of being exploited by a foreign adversary, we do need to understand whether there was, in fact, a decision made by FBI management to transfer you to a special counsel investigation.

A Yeah, and what I would tell you is I don't know the extent to which it was or was not known. And I would defer to the various people, of their, you know, recollections --

Q Does that mean -- I'm sorry to interrupt you, but --

A -- about what they knew about it or didn't.

Q You don't know whether it was known. So would that suggest that you were not counseled?

A No. I am saying I don't know the extent to which it's known,

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and I don't want to get into a discussion of any personnel-type discussions that I had with anybody in the FBI.

Q Okay. Through your career, have you ever, as a counterintelligence agent, made use of knowledge of an affair to recruit a source?

A No.

Q Are you aware of that ever being done?

A Yes.

Q Have you ever supervised an investigation where usage of an affair was made use of to exploit and recruit a source?

A Not to my recollection.

Q But you're fully aware that it is one of maybe a few avenues, I would say, possibly, and you might agree -- finances is another area of recruitment -- that the FBI might use to recruit a source.

A I think the important way, the right way to think of that is you want to find those things which a person would be susceptible for either enticement or blackmail or coercion. I've always found that blackmail and coercion are typically crappy ways to try and recruit somebody; it's much better to do it the other way.

But, at the end of the day, it isn't the individual of action; it's how that action plays in the mind of the person you're trying to recruit or whether or not it makes them vulnerable. And what I'm --

Q Okay. Well --

A -- telling you and what I think I answered in this question this morning is that the existence of my extramarital affair is not

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anything that ever could've been used to coerce me. It is not anything that could've been used to, you know, blackmail me or otherwise, you know, exploit a vulnerability.

Q So you don't believe, personally, that the existence of the affair becoming public to an adversary -- not public, but to an adversary -- would have made you susceptible to potential exploitation.

A I do not.

Q Thank you.

Mr. Gowdy. Agent Strzok, when we left, we were in October of 2016, and you were responding to a text where you wrote: I'm riled up. Trump is a fucking idiot, is unable to provide a coherent answer.

And if I remember correctly, that was in response to your watching the debate. In October of 2016, were you still working on the Russia probe?

Mr. Strzok. I was?

Mr. Gowdy. How about in November of 2016, were you still working on the Russia probe then?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. All right.

This is a text from Lisa Page to you: The New York Times probability numbers are dropping every day. I'm scared for our organization.

Understanding you're not the author of that text but the recipient of it, do you know what organization she could be referencing?

Mr. Strzok. What date, sir?

Mr. Gowdy. November the 3rd, 2016, is the date I have.

Mr. Strzok. Do you have a copy I could look at?

Yeah, Congressman, I believe she -- again, you would have to ask her, but my inference is she's talking about the FBI.

Mr. Gowdy. Were you and she both members of any other organizations other than the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. The Department of Justice, the executive branch of the United States, the Government of the United States. But my read of this is the FBI?

Mr. Gowdy. Some of those may overlap a little bit.

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you ever ask her or did you ever discuss why the New York Times probability numbers dropping would have any impact on your organization, whether it's the executive branch, the Department of Justice, the FBI, or the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. My sense, Congressman, looking back at the time was then-candidate Trump was saying extraordinary amounts about the incompetence of the FBI, particularly with regard to the investigation of Secretary Clinton, was making very destructive and denigrating comments about the professionalism of the FBI. And I was concerned that those comments, particularly in comparison to most of the Republican candidates, were undermining the ability of the FBI to effectively do its job in the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. Oh, so despite the fact you're not the author of that

text, you share those exact same concerns.

Mr. Strzok. No, I didn't say that.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, you just said that. You just referenced the reasons that you would be concerned with a Trump Presidency, but it was actually her text.

Mr. Strzok. What I think I answered was my inference from reading the text of what she meant.

Mr. Gowdy. Did you share those concerns?

Mr. Strzok. I certainly shared concerns about how then-candidate Trump was referring to the actions of the FBI?

Mr. Gowdy. Did you share her concern that you were scared for the organization of the FBI if the New York Times probability numbers continued to drop?

Mr. Strzok. I wouldn't say I was scared. I think I thought there might be a severe test of the rule of law in the FBI.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, on November the 3rd, you did text: Jill Stein and Gary Johnson are F'ing everything up too.

What did "F'ing" stand for?

Mr. Strzok. Fucking.

Mr. Gowdy. So Jill Stein and Gary Johnson are fucking everything up too. What did you mean by that?

Mr. Strzok. My sense was, again, from a personal perspective, looking at the race, the Presidential race, that a variety of actors were causing debates and shifts and movement in a way that was causing core messaging or just general sentiment to be moved and shifted.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, whose chances did you think Stein and Johnson were hurting, Clinton's or Trump's?

Mr. Strzok. No, I believe Clinton's.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, I could almost take from reading this text that you wanted her to win.

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I had -- like many agents, I have, you know, certainly strongly held political opinions that are personal. And I have -- there have been Presidents that I've liked that have been elected; there have been Presidents that I didn't particularly care for that were elected. I can --

Mr. Gowdy. So it's fair to say you were a Clinton supporter?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I think that's clear from the reading of the text, certainly, that I wasn't a Trump fan.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, just to be on the safe side, we'll get you to say it anyway, even if it is clear from the reading of the text. You were a Clinton supporter?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, my personal perspective was that I supported Secretary Clinton ahead of then-candidate Trump?

Mr. Gowdy. And when did you decide to start supporting her? Did you support her in the primary?

Mr. Strzok. No. I -- you know, again, this makes me uncomfortable, that the legislative branch is inquiring about the personal views of an executive --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, your texts make us pretty damn uncomfortable too, Agent Strzok.

Mr. Strzok. If I can finish your question. In the primaries, I was considering -- Governor Kasich had a strong appeal, and I was undecided at some point. Traditionally, I've been very conservative in outlook from a law enforcement, military, national security perspective?

Mr. Gowdy. So I don't know whether that's a "yes" or "no." Were you a supporter of hers in the primary?

Mr. Strzok. Whose primary?

Mr. Gowdy. Hers, the Democrat primary.

Mr. Strzok. For --

Mr. Gowdy. While you were working on her case, if that helps any. The time you were working on her case, were you a supporter?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know when -- there is no point in time where I can tell you I clearly became a, you know, my vote is going here or my vote is going there.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, 4 days later -- we're getting close to the election, I think -- referencing an article entitled "Victory by Mr. Trump Remains Possible," you said: OMG, this is fucking terrifying.

What does "OMG" stand for?

Mr. Strzok. Oh, my God.

Mr. Gowdy. Oh, my God, this is fucking terrifying. What was terrifying about a victory by Trump?

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, can you just tell us the date and time so we can follow along?

Mr. Gowdy. November the 7th, 2016.

Mr. Goelman. The time?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, your question?

Mr. Gowdy. I think it was your lawyer's question whether or not I could point you to the text, and I gave you the date.

Mr. Strzok. Right, but -- I see it.

Mr. Gowdy. What did you mean by "fucking terrifying"?

Mr. Strzok. I'm sorry?

Mr. Gowdy. What did you mean by "fucking terrifying"?

Mr. Strzok. The prospect that candidate Trump might be elected President.

Mr. Gowdy. And just so I'm right in my mind, this is why you were also dispassionately, objectively investigating whether or not he colluded/coordinated with a foreign actor to interfere with the election?

Mr. Strzok. No. Those are independent things, Congressman. I have --

Mr. Gowdy. No, no, no. Is it the same time, not whether or not you conflated the two. That's a separate question. Were those going on at the same time?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. So, in November, when you said it would be fucking terrifying for him to become the President, you were investigating whether or not he had colluded/coordinated/otherwise conspired with a foreign actor to interfere with the election.

Mr. Strzok. No, I don't think that's accurate. The allegations that have been made public are that -- allegations that members of his campaign may have been doing that.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why in the world would you be talking about impeachment if you didn't think he'd done anything wrong?

Mr. Strzok. Because, without getting into details here that are either classified or in the context of an ongoing investigation, my concern, based on the credible allegations that members of his campaign, numbers and coordination unknown, were actively colluding with the Government of Russia struck me as an extraordinary threat to America and represented --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, had you already --

Mr. Strzok. -- the most unbelievably severe and reprehensible sort of behavior that any American could engage in.

Mr. Gowdy. Had you already concluded that he knew about it or was part of it?

Mr. Strzok. I don't think I wanted -- I don't think I want to go into speculation about an ongoing investigation and what I --

Mr. Gowdy. No, I think it's entirely appropriate whether or not you had already concluded that he had colluded/conspired/confederated with a foreign actor while you're investigating it.

Mr. Goelman. Are you talking, Congressman, about November 2016, or are you talking about the impeachment text the following spring?

Mr. Gowdy. I think they're --

Mr. Goelman. What's the timeframe of your question?

Mr. Gowdy. That's a good question. I think that there are texts that reference impeachment both the day after the election and in the spring of 2017.

Mr. Strzok. So which are you referring to? I think --

Mr. Gowdy. How about both?

Mr. Strzok. Well, I believe my statements in use of that was much later into 2017.

My answer to your question is I had not made any judgment about the culpability or lack of culpability of any of the matters that I was aware of investigatively. We were absolutely still very much in the process of gathering information. There were some areas which were much stronger than others, as is true in most cases.

Mr. Gowdy. So the thing you found fucking terrifying, to use your words, was that some members of his campaign may have wittingly or unwittingly colluded/conspired/confederated with Russia, but you had no evidence that he knew anything about it.

Mr. Strzok. No. I think my recollection of that text is the prospect of his winning the Presidency. It is a personal opinion independent of the investigations of any members of his campaign.

Mr. Gowdy. On March the 14th, Lisa Page texted you: Finally two pages away from finishing "All the President's Men." Did you know the President resigns in the end?

And you replied: What? God, that we should be so lucky.

In March of 2017, were you still working on the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. What did you think the President should resign -- what was the cause -- what would the cause of his resignation be?

Mr. Strzok. I think this is a figurative, snarky, tongue-in-cheek remark. It is not some legal analysis of a violation of viability of any active impeachment or crime. This is merely a personal, snarky expression of my personal belief and nothing else.

Mr. Gowdy. You just referenced four different ways of referring to the executive branch. Let's just go with the head of the executive branch. You think the head of the executive branch resigning is just a snarky thing to say?

Mr. Strzok. I think my personal opinion was that I had a -- not a -- no love lost for President Trump.

Mr. Gowdy. Were you investigating what Russia did and with whom, if anyone, they did it in March of 2017?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Gowdy. And you still thought it'd be a good idea for him to resign.

Mr. Strzok. I --

Mr. Gowdy. But yet you're somehow able to separate your professional views from your private views.

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely. What every agent working every case does every day.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, let's get to that.

On May 18, 2017, for your attorney's reference, you texted: For me and this case.

What case would you be referring to?

Mr. Strzok. What's the date on that?

Mr. Gowdy. May the 18th. Anything important happen around May the 17th or 18th that you can recall?

Mr. Strzok. Yeah. So, at that time, it was right around the time that Special Counsel Mueller was appointed, I believe.

Mr. Gowdy. Now, when you say "right around the time," how about the day after.

Mr. Strzok. Okay.

Mr. Gowdy. So, the day after Special Counsel Mueller was appointed, you're still working on the Russia investigation at this point?

Mr. Strzok. I am.

Mr. Gowdy. Have you moved over to the special counsel team yet?

Mr. Strzok. No, I have not.

Mr. Gowdy. "For me and this case." What case were you referring to?

Mr. Strzok. At that time, the Russia collusion investigations.

Mr. Gowdy. "I personally have a sense of unfinished business. I unleashed it with Midyear Exam. Now I need to fix it and finish it."

What is the "it"?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I don't -- we did this earlier, and I don't want to get into parsing individual words. I --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, actually, I do, Agent Strzok. That's why I asked you what does "it" mean. You wrote it. What does it mean?

Mr. Strzok. The text, I'm telling you, Congressman, is my sense that -- we had done Midyear Exam. We saw, and now it's been declassified, and this is me, but the intelligence community watching the Government of Russia take the results and the existence of that examination and use it to influence the election. They did it through social media; they did it through other means.

And my involvement in that case, watching that case go from start to finish, watching a hostile nation -- who, by the way, has credible allegations is colluding with members of a different campaign -- watching that information be weaponized by the Government of Russia and used in the context of our election, my feeling was: I've been in this from the beginning. I worked through, with Jon and others, Midyear. We came to a conclusion. The Government of Russia has taken this and created this entire mess. And I want to sit there and see this through and stop the Government of Russia from interfering in the elections of the United States of America.

Mr. Gowdy. What I find so fascinating about that answer, Special Agent Strzok, is what you also texted on May the 18th, which is: You and I both know the odds are nothing. If I thought it was likely, I'd be there, no question. I hesitate in part because of my gut sense and concern there's no big "there" there.

What's not there?

Mr. Strzok. The context of that quote is, as I looked at the time

at the allegations, I was not certain at the time, one, if there was any sort of illegal activity going on, the nature of that. We had yet to determine, you know, was it going on, was it coordinated, was this a bunch of individual opportunists acting out of their own personal motives, and where that range of activity may lie, and not knowing that.

And, obviously, from the perspective of national security, if any campaign has a couple of outliers who may be doing things improperly, that's bad, but it is not nearly as bad as the prospect of a campaign who has a coordinated effort colluding with a foreign nation. There's a big range in there.

And that's -- it's independent of any party or any candidate. And I can't stress that enough. My concern, my desire to work on this wouldn't matter if it was candidate Trump or candidate Clinton or candidate Sanders or candidate whoever. My drive, my interest in doing this is, as a national security professional, was from the perspective of protecting the United States.

Mr. Gowdy. And I find that interesting, because on exactly the same day you texted those other things, you said: Who gives a fuck. One more AD versus an investigation leading to impeachment.

It sounds to me like you'd already made up your mind. Impeachment of whom?

Mr. Strzok. That's not true.

Mr. Gowdy. Impeachment of whom?

Mr. Strzok. That would've been impeachment of Trump, but the text clearly --

Mr. Gowdy. For what?

Mr. Strzok. But the text clearly does not say "will." My sense was it might. That's undefined in the text, and I had not prejudged or concluded that at all.

Mr. Gowdy. Who gives a fuck. One more AD versus an investigation leading to impeachment.

Mr. Strzok. Right. My sense from that text is there is --

Mr. Gowdy. We just went from you didn't know whether he was involved or not to impeachment, and we're still on the same day, May the 18th.

Mr. Strzok. Right. If you recall what I just said, in my mind was a range of potential activities. One was nothing or some uncoordinated individuals doing something they shouldn't. On the other extreme --

Mr. Gowdy. Wait a minute. Hang on a second.

Mr. Strzok. If I can finish, sir. On the other extreme, a coordinated conspiracy to collude with the Government of Russia. That is a big range. And I had not decided and had not prejudged --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, you're looking at a range I'm not even looking at, Mr. Strzok.

Mr. Strzok. In the event of the most grave circumstance, that there was a coordinated effort by the Government of Russia to elect somebody here in the United States, that's an extraordinary allegation. And I think there's no national security professional out there worth his salt who would not want to be fighting to protect America against

that.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why did you say "I hesitate in part"? Why were you hesitating? If it was just your desire to figure out what Russia did to this country, then why did you say you're hesitating?

Mr. Strzok. Because, Congressman, for the very reason I just answered. I was not, at that time, sufficiently aware of the facts to be able to make a judgment of whether or not it was nothing illegal or a set of self-motivated individual actors on the one extreme, all the way to the other extreme of something that would be the most extraordinarily grave action in the Nation.

So my hesitation is simply I didn't know at that time where those facts were, because we were pursuing the facts, objectively, wherever they --

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why would you continue pursuing them?

Mr. Strzok. Because --

Mr. Gowdy. You're an investigator. Why wouldn't you be interested no matter how it ends?

Mr. Strzok. Because every investigator is going to pursue it. The question is with me, where I wanted to be in the context of, on the one hand, I go and I focus on this set of allegations in this investigation; on the other hand, I stay in the FBI, I have a wide range of responsibilities of counterintelligence threats, of espionage investigations, and where I would get the most fulfilment, where I best could serve the Nation.

Of course, every investigator follows every fact to the end.

And, sir, you know. I don't need to tell you that. You know that.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, before I turn it over to Johnny, 4 days later, this is you to Lisa Page: I'm torn, I think. No, I'm more replaceable than you are in this. I'm the best for it, but there are others who can. Okay. You're different and more unique. This is yours. Plus leaving a special counsel, having been a special counsel, resulting in an impeachment, as an attorney, is very different than leaving as an investigator.

There you are, 4 days into Special Counsel Mueller's probe, talking impeachment again, Special Agent Strzok.

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, is this the 21st then?

Mr. Gowdy. That'd be better. I have the 22nd. I hope it is the 21st.

Mr. Goelman. I don't know. I'm just trying to find the text that you're referring to.

Mr. Gowdy. I got it 4 days later, but maybe you found it 3 days later.

Mr. Goelman. I didn't find it. Hang on. I'm looking for it.

Mr. Gowdy. The 22nd is what I have.

It's an email. Show him the email.

Mr. Strzok. So could you repeat the question?

Mr. Gowdy. Yeah. This is 4 days after Special Counsel Mueller's probe has been announced. The day it was announced, you referenced impeachment. Four days later, you referenced impeachment. It sounds, I guess, to someone who might be a little bit cynical that

you had already made up your mind how you wanted it to end. Is that true?

Mr. Strzok. I had absolutely not.

Mr. Gowdy. Well, then why would you just bring up impeachment?

Mr. Strzok. That was one of the possible and the most severe outcome of the investigation. And when you read it in the context of what was going on, President Trump firing Director Comey and on the one hand saying it had to do with the Clinton investigation and then telling a Russian diplomat that a great pressure had been lifted on the Russia investigations of him, when in the context of that footnote you'll see was news reporting that President Trump had asked intelligence community chiefs to take certain actions, my concern and thought was it was certainly possible. But in no way had I prejudged or decided that any investigative outcome was going to happen.

Mr. Gowdy. We may be out of time.

You got anything?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Let me at least get started then.

Agent Strzok, I know he asked some questions -- I wasn't in the room -- about the Midyear Exam, so I wanted to go back and explore with you when the decision was made not to charge Hillary Clinton.

And the first expression that I see of that is a memorandum that Jim Comey wrote, apparently, on May 2nd of 2016. Are you there familiar with that?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I believe so. Is that his first draft of what a statement might look like?

Mr. Ratcliffe. It is. And, in fairness to you, you are not one of the four people that it was originally addressed to. It was addressed to Andy McCabe, Jim Baker, Jim Rybicki. That's it. But you're familiar with it?

Mr. Strzok. I am.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So are you familiar that in this -- I'm just going to call it a memo, Jim Comey expresses what he describes as his thoughts? Do you have any information that someone other than Jim Comey put together this initial draft?

Mr. Strzok. I don't.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So this is the draft of Jim Comey, who is a, what, about a 30-year Federal prosecutor?

Mr. Strzok. That's my understanding. I don't know his biography that well.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And so, in it, he expresses a couple things: one, the possibility of an FBI-only press event, correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, that's my recollection.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I'll represent to you it says --

Mr. Strzok. Okay.

Mr. Ratcliffe. -- "If I decided to do an FBI-only press event."

The second thing is it sets forth some conclusions based upon what he reflects is 8 months of work. And one of the conclusions that he reaches in here is that, in his own words, that, after 8 months, that Hillary Clinton had committed the elements for an offense under the Espionage Act, that being handling classified information that she had

access to in a grossly negligent manner. Correct?

Mr. Strzok. I don't believe he stated that she had violated that crime, if I recall that draft correctly.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well --

Mr. Strzok. Do you have a copy?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do we have an extra copy? This is the only copy I have.

Mr. Goelman. We'll accept your representations as to what it says. It's just he's not going to be able to answer from memory what the document says.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, you reviewed the statute, right?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I did.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And elements of a commission of an offense under that would include handling classified information in a grossly negligent manner.

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay.

In fairness, he goes on to explain why, despite the commission of the elements as they're written, that no reasonable prosecutor would bring the case in that first draft. Correct?

Mr. Strzok. I'm sorry. I'm reading it because I'm very familiar with the final version, but the prior ones I'm not at all well-versed.

Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So a couple things that struck me about

that is a very experienced former Deputy Attorney General of the United States, former United States attorney, Jim Comey, in his own words, came to the initial conclusion that Hillary Clinton was grossly negligent in the handling of classified information, and through a series of edits and revisions that was changed from "gross negligence" to "extreme carelessness." Correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Why was that done?

Mr. Strzok. My recollection was there was a great deal -- and we spoke about this before, when you were not in the room. There was a great deal of discussion by the attorneys about the -- I'm not an attorney. But the attorneys went and talked at length about the nature of "gross negligence," how that is defined, how it is poorly defined in some cases, what the application of that term with regard to the statute historically has been, how the Department has viewed the use of that statute and, in fact, for this, has not used it, concerns about the constitutionality of the statute based on the lack of a scienter requirement, as well as the fact that an analysis of the broad set of cases for mishandling classified information that we have prosecuted -- we, the Department of Justice, have prosecuted kind of fall into the big buckets that he articulates, and, based on that, that it was not consistent with applying that statute?

And the attorneys, there was some, as I recall it, discussion of, well, if we're going to use the descriptor "gross negligence," that is going to key to a specific legal definition of that term. Is that

going to confuse things? Is it actually the appropriate use of the term or not? And so, again, amongst this kind of extended legal discussion, the decision was made to change that characterization to "extremely careless."

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. I appreciate that explanation. But regardless of whether it was gross negligence or extreme carelessness, it in some respects doesn't really matter, because the decision had been made that no reasonable prosecutor would bring this and the team had, as reflected in this, decided that she wasn't going to be charged.

Mr. Strzok. No, that's inaccurate. I think this is, as he states at the beginning, envisioning a scenario in which we didn't -- or he didn't recommend prosecution, what he might do.

My recollection is there was no final decision made until the end of the case. You know, you're both veterans of U.S. attorney and assistant U.S. attorney's offices. Any good investigator worth his salt after an intensive many, many months of investigation will frequently arrive at the point where you know if there are defects in the evidence that you have that might be insurmountable.

[4:52 p.m.]

Mr. Strzok. So, in my mind, this is not a decision that somebody is or isn't going to be prosecuted. This is very much a: If we choose not to, I am thinking about doing this.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So if the decision was made at the end of the case, when is the end of the case?

Mr. Strzok. Shortly after her interview in the beginning of July?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Her interview was July 2nd, 2016.

Chairman Goodlatte. Mr. Ratcliffe, could you pause for just a second on that?

Just one question on that. Is there another document in which Director Comey says, envisioning a circumstance in which we will prosecute her, these are the things I want to consider?

Mr. Strzok. Mr. Chairman, not to my knowledge?

Chairman Goodlatte. Thank you.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So, if that's the case, there's a number of text messages back and forth between, frankly, different members of the team, but including you, reflecting the fact that a decision had already been made before her July 2nd --

Mr. Strzok. Again, I don't think it's a fair characterization to say that a decision had been made. I think we saw the facts; certainly, with the prosecutors, they understood where the gaps and the problems were, and, you know, some level of understanding of whether or not we would be able to develop evidence to fill those gaps. But

I would not say a decision had been made?

Mr. Ratcliffe. Again, not to -- but explain to me, then, why on July 1st you and Ms. Page exchanged texts about the fact that, in addition to the members of the Midyear team, the Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, knew that Hillary Clinton was not going to be charged and, therefore, was not a, quote/unquote, profile in courage?

Mr. Strzok. Because, as I indicated, I think the sense, particularly amongst the career prosecutors, in particular at DOJ but as well as those of us in the FBI, understood by that point in the investigation that any of the statutes that we had available to us, based on the way they had been applied and used in the past in prosecutions, had significant gaps in our ability to successfully and responsibly bring charges.

Mr. Goelman. Congressman, I think, by my watch, we are 4 minutes past the hour.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. We'll pick up with that our next round.

[Recess.]

Ms. Kim. We will go back on the record. The time is 5:01.

Mr. Cummings. Mr. Strzok, welcome.

Mr. Strzok. Thank you, sir?

Mr. Cummings. In your experience, are criminal targets considered innocent until they are proven otherwise?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. And your job is to search for evidence or proof of their guilt. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. Guilt or innocence, yes?

Mr. Cummings. Or innocence. And if you don't find evidence of their guilt, ultimately, what do you do?

Mr. Strzok. You let them go. You close the investigation?

Mr. Cummings. So, in most investigations, even before the last witness has been interviewed, do investigators and prosecutors discuss whether there's enough evidence to charge a case with a search for additional evidence and whether those searches for additional evidence are successful?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. In your experience, when in the lifecycle of a case do those discussions start?

Mr. Strzok. They start very early on. The initial allegation, one of the first discussions with prosecutors involve, you know, what violations might be at issue and what the elements of those crimes are. And it continues throughout the case?

Mr. Cummings. So, even before the last witness has been interviewed, do investigators and prosecutors typically discuss the chances of success for a potential case, not just an indictment but a trial?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, that's a fair statement?

Mr. Cummings. So that's not unusual.

Mr. Strzok. It's not unusual. That's correct?

Mr. Cummings. And is the amount of probative evidence that has been discovered in the investigation a relevant metric in those

discussions?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. Was Secretary Clinton's knowledge and intent key to the FBI's recommendation not to charge her?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. Why was the lack of evidence or intent fatal to the case?

Mr. Strzok. Again, I would defer to -- as I've said, I'm not an attorney, and I would defer to the expert attorneys both at the FBI and the Department of Justice. But in the historic -- my understanding of how statutes have been used with regard to the mishandling of classified information, those have been done in the context of the knowledge of the individual was always an element of those prosecutions?

And in the case of Midyear, in the case of this investigation, the Department of Justice, as well as the FBI, took a very exhaustive look at all the times that those statutes had been applied and charged with regard to the mishandling of classified information and developed a series of criteria, one of which, certainly, was the knowledge or the intent of the person who did it, and that that was a critical element.

Mr. Cummings. So when did you first understand that the evidence of Secretary Clinton's intent would be the lynchpin to the charging decision?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that I would characterize it as the

lynchpin. I would say that we understood -- maybe not so much the lynchpin, but one of the significant hurdles we had was being able to demonstrate through evidence that we knew she had an intent or a desire to knowingly violate any of the statutes that we were looking at?

Mr. Cummings. So is it safe to say you were looking for evidence of intent early on and in the document reviews and in the interviews?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, throughout?

Mr. Cummings. Now, sir, did you ultimately find sufficient evidence of Secretary Clinton's knowledge and intent to recommend charging a criminal case against her?

Mr. Strzok. Not that was consistent with past use of the statutes by the Department of Justice?

Mr. Cummings. Uh-huh. And how was that so significant?

Mr. Strzok. Well, it's --

Mr. Cummings. Past use.

Mr. Strzok. It's significant because there is a process. We have a way in which the laws are applied by the Department of Justice. We seek to do that in a manner that is blind. It does not take into account a person's position or race or sex or anything of that nature. And the consistency of that practice is one of the hallmarks of the rule of law?

Mr. Cummings. Uh-huh. Now, did you investigate this matter as aggressively as you would any other matter?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. Did you investigate with the same determination

to make a case as in any other matter?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. Can you point to specific instances where you investigated the matter aggressively and with the goal of finding relevant evidence to make a case?

Mr. Strzok. Absolutely. There are any number of them. And, you know, there was frequently a disagreement between the Department of Justice and the Bureau. My experience is typically that agents tend to be more aggressive than prosecutors because we're approaching things a little differently?

But with regard to this specific case, there are any number of things. Probably one of the primary examples are: Secretary Clinton gave the body, the corpus of her emails to attorneys to sort through, to determine what was work-related and what wasn't. We came to know that those laptops existed, and we had investigative concerns that the sort process had not been rigorous, that there might have been things that it missed, and that there might be --

Mr. Cummings. How did you come to that conclusion?

Mr. Strzok. That was what was told to me by our forensic examiners, by our analysts and our agents. As they looked at the body of emails that we had, we found work-related emails through a host of material that we had obtained by consent or via search warrant in some cases that were not amongst the material that Secretary Clinton had produced as work-related email?

One of the hypotheses by -- and I forget who it was, but one of

the great members of this extraordinary team, was that it was possible that just the mechanics of the sort process used had been faulty. And our desire was to -- you know, A, those laptops at one time had all of the emails on them; B, that, by getting that, we could go through and ensure that we did have all of the work-related emails by Secretary Clinton and not just the ones that she had provided for us.

Certainly, whether it was a, you know, inadvertent or poorly designed search or, worse, if there was some nefarious purpose and not turn some things over -- I'm speaking too long.

The takeaway is that we felt strongly that we needed to get those laptops. Defense counsel disagreed vehemently. They viewed them as protected by a variety of privileges, and the Department of Justice initially didn't think that we should pursue that.

But we, I, the entire team advocated aggressively that these were essential to our understanding of the case and that we needed to get that material before we could conclude with a sense of legitimacy and completeness that we had gotten or looked at every possible place that those emails might exist.

Mr. Cummings. Well, when did your team complete the review of the emails?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I would have to go back and check the record. That's a -- I don't know without access to the file. It was prior to the interview of Secretary Clinton, for sure. It was sometime in the spring of 2016, if memory serves correctly?

Mr. Cummings. Did those emails --

Mr. Goelman. '17?

Mr. Strzok. '16. '16.

Mr. Cummings. Did those emails reveal any, quote, "smoking gun," unquote, evidence of Secretary Clinton's intent?

Mr. Strzok. No?

Mr. Cummings. When did your team interview the individuals who had sent Secretary Clinton classified information in her emails?

Mr. Strzok. That took place throughout the course of the investigation. There was no set period where we went out and interviewed them. We identified as best we could the authors of every piece of classified information and went out and talked to them about how that material came to be placed into those emails?

Mr. Cummings. And, in those interviews, did you come up with any smoking gun?

Mr. Strzok. No?

Mr. Cummings. Did the investigation ever yield smoking-gun evidence of Secretary Clinton's intent?

Mr. Strzok. No?

Mr. Cummings. Now --

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, if I can back up to that last question. When you say "smoking gun," I am taking that to mean did we find any evidence that she acted with ill intent to do what she did, and that's how I'm responding to that question?

Mr. Cummings. Yes. Yes.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir?

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Mr. Cummings. The Inspector General report states -- and this is kind of a long quote, so listen carefully: Our review found that the Midyear team concluded beginning in early 2016 that evidence supporting a prosecution of former Secretary Clinton or her senior aides was likely lacking. This conclusion was based on the fact that the Midyear team had not found evidence that former Secretary Clinton or her senior aides knowingly transmitted classified information on unclassified systems because, one, classified information exchanged in unclassified emails was not clearly or properly marked, and, two, State Department staff introducing classified information into the emails made an effort to, quote, "talk around it," end of quote.

Is this conclusion consistent with your experience on this case?

Mr. Strzok. It is. I would add there are probably even further characteristics that created problems from any prospective prosecution. But I agree with the statements in that paragraph you just read?

Mr. Cummings. Okay.

To be very clear, at this point in early 2016, when the team had examined much of the body of evidence but had not found evidence of intent, did the team stop looking for evidence of intent?

Mr. Strzok. No?

Mr. Cummings. At this point in -- so, at this point in 2016, when the team had examined much of the body of evidence but had not found evidence of intent, did the team stop examining the evidence or interviewing pertinent witnesses?

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Mr. Strzok. No. We kept going?

Mr. Cummings. At this point in early 2016, when the team had examined much of the body of evidence but had not found evidence of intent, did the team stop conducting effective and aggressive interviews to solicit evidence of intent?

Mr. Strzok. No?

Mr. Cummings. Now, in fact, the next sentence states, and I quote: The Midyear team continued its investigation, taking the investigative steps and looking for evidence that could change their assessment, end of quote.

This is my question. At any point in the investigation, if the team had found any evidence of intent, would the Midyear investigative team have pursued that lead?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. And that includes in the actual interview of Hillary Clinton. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes?

Mr. Cummings. All right.

Now, many of your personal actions and texts have been used as evidence that the FBI, its leadership, and the Justice Department overall is deeply biased and corrupt.

I'd just like to give you the opportunity to directly respond to anything you think is missing from the record or would better help the American people understand whether they should trust the career professionals at the FBI and DOJ who are protecting our country every

day.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir, and thank you for that opportunity.

I would tell you FBI agents are people, and all of us have personal political opinions, and that is something that we all feel passionately about. But I can tell you, all of us, me, but everybody I work with, those personal opinions, when you walk in the door, those get left behind.

The FBI that I know and have been a member of is made up of people who pursue the facts where they lay and apply the law to those facts. I did not, nor would I ever, take any act based on my personal beliefs in the conduct of my official business, nor would anybody else that I know working at the FBI. I would not tolerate it in myself or others, and all those men and women at the FBI are exactly the same way.

I am deeply troubled by the way that -- the insinuation that somehow these personal beliefs are inappropriate or, worse, are necessarily evidence of some corrupt bias are being used to undermine the integrity of the FBI, the way that they are being used to destroy the image and trustworthiness of the FBI in the eyes of the American public for purely partisan ways. It is destructive, it is corrosive to the rule of law, and it is absolutely something terrible that's been occurring.

Mr. Cummings. All right. Thank you very much.

Mr. Strzok. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Johnson. Mr. Strzok, I'm Hank Johnson.

In the Clinton investigation, did you generally advocate for

aggressively seeking and compelling evidence?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, good afternoon. Yes, I did?

Mr. Johnson. Did you generally advocate for or against the use of compulsory process?

Mr. Strzok. I typically advocated for the use of compulsory process, yes?

Mr. Johnson. Why?

Mr. Strzok. Because, in my experience, there is a point which negotiating with counsel hits a stage that is not productive or is taking too long. And my belief is that, if you have the ability, through a subpoena, certainly a search warrant, to go get that evidence, it is frequently the most effective way either to get it, or usually, frequently, in my experience, the threat of that will cause counsel to then come forward voluntarily and produce the information you want?

Mr. Johnson. Did Lisa Page advocate for or against the use of compulsory process in the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. She advocated for it?

Mr. Johnson. Why do you think she did that?

Mr. Strzok. I think -- you would have to ask her. My belief is that she felt a, you know, aggressive investigation is the appropriate way that the Bureau should be pursuing all its work?

Mr. Johnson. Were there disagreements in when to use or not use compulsory process between the FBI team and the DOJ team?

Mr. Strzok. There were?

Mr. Johnson. Generally, when there were disagreements, what was

the DOJ's position?

Mr. Strzok. I don't want -- it wouldn't be right for me to generalize. I think, having said that, that typically Bureau agents and investigators and certainly me in this context tend to be much more aggressive in our desire to use compulsory process and to pursue information, because our motivation tends to be just to get the information. We want to build as comprehensive a picture and understanding of what occurred, whereas DOJ attorneys are looking at it from a little bit -- prosecutors -- from a different perspective. They are not only -- of course they want the facts, but they have concerns about how to introduce that at trial and whether or not this is something that is going to address a particular element of the crime?

And that, in my career, has been a very natural tension point. So I think it's entirely consistent in this case that we tended to be more aggressive, in many instances, in pushing for a compulsory process than DOJ was.

Mr. Johnson. Is it fair to say that, in the Clinton email investigation, that you adhered to the general philosophy, if you will, of FBI lawyers that you were going to demand and be on the side of those seeking aggressive investigation using compulsory process?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I think it's fair that me and the investigative team were absolutely aggressive in trying to pursue the facts and, specifically, to include compulsory process?

Mr. Johnson. You treated this investigation the same way that you would treat any other investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I did?

Mr. Johnson. Did you ever come to believe or think that career prosecutors disagreed with your more aggressive approach based on legitimate legal differences of opinion?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. If I'm hearing you correctly, I did believe that the disagreements were based on legitimate disagreements based on legal reasons?

Mr. Johnson. Did you think that the DOJ career prosecutors were making these decisions based on their personal political views?

Mr. Strzok. No?

[Strzok Exhibit No. 10

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Johnson. Sir, I'd like to turn to what's been marked as exhibit 10, which is a section of the Inspector General's report. And I'd like to take you to chapter 5, section 3 and 4.

Mr. Strzok. What page is that, sir.

Okay. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Mr. Johnson. And I'd like to go through that section to discuss the use of compulsory process in the investigation.

Did you -- or have you had an opportunity to read this section of the IG report?

Mr. Strzok. I have.

Mr. Johnson. Are you familiar with the use of compulsory evidence in the MYE investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Compulsory instruments to get that evidence, yes,

I am.

Mr. Johnson. I will direct you to specific parts of this excerpt, but if you need any additional time to review or read in depth, please let me know.

Mr. Strzok. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson. On the page numbered 79, the first paragraph after the subheader reads as follows: "Despite the public perception that the Midyear investigation did not use a grand jury, and instead relied exclusively on consent, we found that agents and prosecutors did use grand jury subpoenas and other compulsory process to gain access to documentary and digital evidence. According to documents we reviewed, at least 56 grand jury subpoenas were issued, five court orders were obtained pursuant to 18 U.S.C. section 2703(d) (2703(d) orders), and three search warrants were granted."

Were you part of the decision to issue any of the 56 grand jury subpoenas?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I was aware of them. I was -- again, those issuance were at levels below me, but I was certainly aware of all of them.

Mr. Johnson. Were you part of the decision to issue any of the 5703(d) orders?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. 2703(d), yes, sir.

Mr. Johnson. Were you part of the decision to issue any of the three search warrants?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Johnson. In fact, if you turn to page 85, end of the first line, the IG report describes an instance where you and Lisa Page appear to author a list of instances where you had clashed with the DOJ prosecutors' decisions to negotiate with counsel.

The report reads, quote, "Strzok told us that at the time he wrote this email, he was 'aggravated by the limitations' that the prosecutors were placing on the FBI's ability to obtain evidence and felt that 'if you add up this delta over a bunch of decisions, all of a sudden it becomes substantive.'"

Are these sections of the Inspector General's report consistent with your general experience on the Midyear review, that you were aggravated by DOJ's caution?

Mr. Strzok. At times, yes, I was.

Mr. Johnson. Is the description that you were aggravated by the DOJ's hesitation to seek compulsory process accurate?

Mr. Strzok. I was at times aggravated by it, yes, that's accurate.

Mr. Johnson. You were aggravated at times.

Mr. Strzok. At times, yes, sir.

Mr. Johnson. Generally, why did the FBI advocate for the use of compulsory process?

Mr. Strzok. Again, because I think, in my experience, that there comes a time you can ask for something, and frequently that becomes very slow, or you end up in a series of negotiations which overly limit access to the material that you'd like to have. And in those instances

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where for those items of evidence you have enough to either issue a subpoena or a search warrant or get a 2703(d) order, my experience is that you just do it. It's faster. It's more aggressive. It cuts to the chase. And more than that, it also sends a tone to all the parties, to opposing counsel, to the team, to the prosecutors, that, you know, we're being aggressive, we're driving down the process of this investigation to get to a resolution.

So I think it's important for all of those reasons.

Mr. Johnson. And, again, generally, why did the career prosecutors in this case favor obtaining evidence through consent?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I think you need to ask them. I think that all -- I think every one of those decisions is a little bit different. I think that, again, for the reasons I mentioned earlier, they are looking at -- they're looking with a different lens at the material. They're looking at its relevance to the elements of the crime. They are looking at the legality and the admissibility of some of the evidence. They are looking at future back-and-forth with opposing counsel and developing a relationship over the span of a case. So I think every particular item probably has a different set of circumstances.

Mr. Johnson. Did you think that the career prosecutors disagreed with the FBI based on legitimate legal differences of opinion?

Mr. Strzok. Generally, yes. I think sometimes I was probably frustrated. I wished they were a little more gung-ho. But, generally, yeah, I think it was absolutely legitimate disagreement.

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Mr. Johnson. Did you think that the DOJ career prosecutors were making these decisions based on their personal political views?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Johnson. In your experience, did any senior political leaders at DOJ intervene in the decision to seek or not seek compulsory process? And I'll give you these names.

Loretta Lynch?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Johnson. Sally Yates?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Johnson. Matt Axelrod?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Johnson. John Carlin.

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Johnson. Did any of the agreements on how to obtain evidence affect the thoroughness of the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Johnson. In your experience, is it common to have disagreements between FBI agents and DOJ prosecutors working on a case?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. Is it common for the FBI to want to move more quickly or aggressively and for the DOJ to ask for more evidence or to take a more cautious approach?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, that's fair.

Mr. Johnson. Based on your answers to this section, is it fair

to say that you were aggressive in suggesting that the Clinton email investigation make use of compulsory process?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. And is it also fair to say that you believe that prosecutors disagreed with your suggestions based on legitimate legal differences in opinion and not because of political bias?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. Okay.

Sir, I want to turn your attention to the reopening of the Clinton email investigation after the discovery of emails on Anthony Weiner's laptop. Were you a part of the process of reopening -- or the decision to reopen the investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. Did you help draft the December 2016 letter that Director Comey sent to Congress announcing the reopening of the Clinton email investigation?

Mr. Strzok. I believe it was October 2016. Yes.

Mr. Johnson. You participated in the drafting of that letter?

Mr. Strzok. I did.

Mr. Johnson. Was it your understanding that that letter would be to Congress and would not be made public?

Mr. Strzok. My understanding was it was likely to immediately be made public.

Mr. Johnson. Well, let me ask you this question. Did you still support sending the letter even if it would become public?

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Mr. Strzok. I ultimately supported the decision to send the letter by Director Comey, to send the letter to Congress.

Mr. Johnson. Why did you support sending that letter to Congress?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, it was an extraordinarily difficult decision, and I was one of a number of people who was in the debate in advising Director Comey. I think he has spoken at length and eloquently about his thought process before this body as well as in his book and in public. It was a decision that none of us took lightly and a decision that, I think, for all of us, was right on the margin. I think for everybody it was a 51-49 sort of thought.

I think, at the end of the day, given the fact that Director Comey had made the speech that he did on July 5th and the inference that, if there was a change, that he -- in subsequent statements to Congress that he had made, that for a variety of reasons, but certainly one of those reasons, that were we to reopen active investigation, that he and the FBI had an obligation to notify Congress.

So I don't want to speak to all of the reasons. That's not a question for him, and I think he's answered that. But that's my understanding of one of the many reasons why it was done.

Mr. Johnson. Did you agree with the decision to reopen the email investigation after the discovery of the emails on Anthony Weiner's laptop?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I did.

Mr. Johnson. And you supported the sending of the letter that

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you helped draft to Congress?

Mr. Strzok. With not nearly the same surety that I had that we needed to reactivate the investigation, but, yes, I did support it.

Mr. Johnson. You knew that it would be made public?

Mr. Strzok. I did. Well, I -- yes, I suspected it to a level of belief that it was almost certain.

Mr. Johnson. And you knew that it would hurt the Hillary Clinton campaign, did you not, if it became public?

Mr. Strzok. I did. Yes, I did.

Mr. Johnson. But, still, you acquiesced in sending the letter?

Mr. Strzok. I don't think "acquiesce" is the right word. I think, after debate, I agreed with the decision.

Mr. Johnson. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Ms. Kim. We'll go off the record for a second. Thank you. The time is 5:32.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Kim. We're going to go back on the record. The time is 5:33.

Mr. Cicilline. Mr. Strzok, I'm David Cicilline from Rhode Island.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, good afternoon.

Mr. Cicilline. Good afternoon.

I just want to begin with one brief question where Mr. Johnson left off. I think you said you agreed with the decision and maybe even participated in the discussion about the appropriateness of notifying

Congress about the reopening of the Clinton investigation.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Cicilline. And you knew at the time that that was likely to be made public and likely to do harm to her candidacy.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. And did you contribute to that decision as a result of bias that you had toward Hillary Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. What contributed to your rendering that decision along with your colleagues?

Mr. Strzok. It was solely driven by the objective pursuit of the investigation and the right thing to do with regard to Bureau policies and past actions.

Mr. Cicilline. So, when we heard our colleagues spend a lot of time today suggesting you had bias against President Trump, or candidate Trump, how would that square with your decision to divulge something that you knew would be harmful to her election and may, in fact, have significantly contributed to her loss?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I think that's the absolute deep underlying fallacy and irony of this entire line. The things that I did -- immediately sending agents to contact New York, advocating that we needed to open the case as soon as I found out that there was potentially relevant information, drafting the letter to Congress, while at the same time saying nothing, keeping extraordinarily compartmented the work we were doing with regard to the Russian

influence investigations -- all of those actions universally -- and none of these were driven by these considerations, but all of those actions were to the detriment of the candidacy of Secretary Clinton and to the benefit of candidate Trump.

So it's extraordinarily -- "ironic" is probably a very kind word, that that's the perception being attempted to be portrayed.

Mr. Cicilline. Thank you.

I now want to turn your attention to the July 5th, 2016, statement that Director Comey drafted on the Clinton investigation recommending not to prosecute Secretary Clinton, and I'd like to walk you through what happened in a little more detail.

Can you describe the general process that Director Comey used in drafting the July 5th statement on the Clinton investigation, and, particularly, what was your role in drafting or editing the statement?

Mr. Strzok. So I don't know how he drafted it. When I was forwarded -- my recollection is that I was forwarded an email by Deputy Director McCabe of something Director Comey had written a draft. I don't know the process or how he did it, but, in any event, it was forwarded to me. A small number of folks on the team and kind of asked for, you know, thoughts, what do you think about this.

And then, following that point in time, there were enumerable discussions amongst the investigative team about that statement and things ranging -- again, I mentioned earlier, factual accuracies, things that we could state, the most appropriate and accurate way to state things, interpretations of law, past practice of law,

characterization of law, and putting that all together in a way that would be understandable by somebody who wasn't a lawyer.

Mr. Cicilline. And the first time that you saw that was receiving a draft that you understood was prepared by Director Comey himself, correct?

Mr. Strzok. That's my understanding.

Mr. Cicilline. And that would've been in an email that you received from Mr. McCabe on May 6 of 2016.

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that. If you do, I'll take your representation.

Mr. Cicilline. Okay.

Who held the authority to approve the final language of the July 5th, 2016, statement?

Mr. Strzok. Director Comey.

Mr. Cicilline. So you didn't have the authority to approve the final language or the statement recommending not to prosecute Secretary Clinton. Is that right?

Mr. Strzok. That's right.

Mr. Cicilline. And did you ever make edits or suggestions, modifications to that statement with the purpose of helping Secretary Clinton or damaging the Trump campaign?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Did anyone else, to your knowledge?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge, no.

Mr. Cicilline. Did you ever push back on the group consensus on

the legal conclusions that were made during the drafting process? Some of them you have discussed already in this testimony.

Mr. Strzok. "Push back" I think -- I don't know that I would use that word. There was a lot of robust discussion about the various legal aspects. But all of the conclusions, I think, were supported by the facts and law and precedent.

Mr. Cicilline. And were the members of the Midyear Exam FBI team free to express their concerns throughout the drafting process?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. And do you recall any member of the team expressing significant disagreements about the statement's final wording?

Mr. Strzok. I do not.

Mr. Cicilline. Did anyone significantly disagree with the final language in Director Comey's July 5th, 2016, press statement?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Now, there has been a lot of excitement by my colleagues on the other side of aisle about the initial statement being drafted before the FBI officially closed the Clinton investigation in July 2016. And some have even suggested something suspicious about that.

Would you explain -- do you believe that Director Comey acted improperly or prematurely by drafting an initial statement before Secretary Clinton and other interviews occurred? Can you explain why or why not? And is that an unusual practice in the normal course of

an investigation?

Mr. Strzok. So I don't think it is unusual to think about the violations or exposure any particular individual may or may not have. This was unusual in that that statement was made with regard to an individual that we were not going to recommend charges. But setting that aside, I don't think the fact that prior to the conclusion of a case, particularly one that's particularly intensive and has had a lot of work done, that prosecutors and agents arrived at an understanding before the case is complete that there are significant flaws in some or all potential charges or absolutely strong, sustainable charges.

So it is not -- my observation is that, in a big case, it can frequently occur that people have an idea well before the end of the case whether or not you're going to be able to overcome hurdles to prosecution.

Mr. Cicilline. Thank you.

I'm going to now ask you to turn your attention to an exhibit that I'd ask be marked as exhibit 11 and ask, do you recognize this email?

[Strzok Exhibit No. 11

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Cicilline. And was it written by you alone, or was it a reflection of a collaborative discussion?

Mr. Strzok. It was a collaborative discussion.

Mr. Cicilline. And the email has a redacted name. Do you remember who besides you and Jon Moffa collaborated on this email?

Mr. Strzok. I don't. It's one of two people, Ms. Page or another OGC attorney.

Mr. Cicilline. And if you turn to the second page, under the subheader, "Topic for Further Discussion," you wrote: "6) Whether her conduct rises to the legal definition of gross negligence." Do you see that?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Cicilline. Why did the team need to have further discussion about whether Secretary Clinton's conduct rose to the legal definition of gross negligence?

Mr. Strzok. Because this -- my recollection, sir, is this came up in the context of going through the draft statement. Some of the attorneys, if I recall correctly -- it was not me, but I think it was one of the attorneys raised the question, okay, well, he's saying here gross negligence. Is that what he means, that is, I'm not an attorney, but that is -- that carries a legal definition with it. Clearly it's part of the statutes, but it also goes to, you know, an application across a variety of statutes.

And so, as I recall the issue being raised by the attorneys, it was: Hey, we need to talk about this because I'm not sure that it is exactly right here. And that presence there on that list, this topic number 6, is simply flagging that for future discussion.

Mr. Cicilline. And, in that discussion, do you recall whether or not a member of the team was concerned specifically about using language that is also a legal standard and that that might result in

some confusion?

Mr. Strzok. That is my recollection of part of what the concern was.

Mr. Cicilline. And were you the first to raise this concern, or was it a view of others in the group?

Mr. Strzok. I didn't raise it. It was the view of others in the group. And my recollection is, certainly, on the team with the DOJ attorneys, this issue of demonstrating intent and the scienter elements was something we had discussed in the past. I don't know if, in the context of the Director, this point had been raised or not. It may have been, but I just don't remember.

Mr. Cicilline. Do you recall whether you had a view on this question?

Mr. Strzok. My view was that it was complicated, and I didn't understand the issue in the way the really bright attorneys did.

Mr. Cicilline. Did the team ultimately reach a consensus on whether Secretary Clinton had acted in a grossly negligent manner?

Mr. Strzok. I think the closest I would say -- and I would defer to the attorneys. I think, as I recall it, there was some concern as to whether or not we could demonstrate that because of how that was defined in various ways in various courts. But, again, that is my nonattorney, nonlegal understanding of the issue.

[Strzok Exhibit No. 12

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. Cicilline. Now I'm going to ask you, Mr. Strzok, to look at

a document that has been marked as exhibit 12. This is an exhibit of a resolution introduced by Republican Members of Congress on May 22nd, 2018, requesting that the Attorney General appoint a second special counsel to investigate the Department of Justice and the FBI.

On page 4, the first clause begins, and I quote, "Whereas Director Comey, in the final draft of his statement, allowed FBI Agent Peter Strzok to replace 'grossly negligent,' which is legally punishable under Federal law, with 'extremely careless,' which is not legally punishable under Federal law."

Do you see that paragraph?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Cicilline. And, Mr. Strzok, do you agree with the characterization that Director Comey, and I quote, allowed you to replace "grossly negligent" with "extremely careless"?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. At the time "grossly negligent" was used in the initial draft, did Director Comey's statement conclude that the FBI recommended prosecution of Secretary Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. It did not recommend that.

Mr. Cicilline. Did the edit of replacing "grossly negligent" with "extremely careless" change the FBI's substantive conclusion in any way?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Do you recall specifically whether that edit was made by you or someone else?

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Mr. Strzok. It was not made by me. A bunch of us were sitting in my office. It is possible I was typing that in, but it was -- that change was not submitted by me.

Mr. Cicilline. And was that change a reflection of the opinion of the group?

Mr. Strzok. It was certainly the opinion of the attorneys, who I think explained to the group in a way that we said, yes, we agree or that makes sense, to the extent we understand it.

Mr. Cicilline. And why, ultimately, was the edit made?

Mr. Strzok. I think because, one, the director decided he wanted it made; two, I think it was the consensus that it was, from a legal and common reading perspective, the most appropriate -- or a better way to say what Director Comey was trying to convey.

Mr. Cicilline. So the assertion that's made in this official document by Republican Members of Congress about you is false as it relates to you changing the word.

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Cicilline. Now I'm going to ask you, Mr. Strzok, if you would turn to page 3, where the fourth clause states, and I quote, "Whereas according to transcripts obtained by the Senate Judiciary Committee, former Director Comey was prepared to exonerate Hillary Clinton as early as April or May of 2016 when he began to draft a statement announcing the end of his investigation, before up to 17 key witnesses, including former Secretary Clinton and several of her closest aides, were interviewed."

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Mr. Strzok, is it accurate to say former Director Comey was prepared to exonerate Hillary Clinton as early as April or May of 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I don't believe that's accurate.

Mr. Cicilline. If the FBI's interviews of Secretary Clinton and others produced new evidence that supported prosecuting Secretary Clinton, would the FBI have ignored that evidence and stuck with the existing draft statement?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. In other words, did the initial draft statements in the spring of 2016 lock in the FBI's recommendations not to prosecute regardless of any new evidence?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. But the FBI did not actually receive new evidence in these interviews that supported prosecuting Secretary Clinton. Isn't that correct?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Cicilline. And now I would ask you to turn --

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, let me -- I would expand on that a little bit. The information that we developed subsequent to the drafting of that statement did not get us to the point where I think Director Comey could reasonably conclude that charges were appropriate.

Mr. Cicilline. And I just want to say that the IG report, at page 238, and I quote, found: We found no evidence that Comey's public statement announcing the FBI's decision to close the investigation was

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the result of bias or an effort to influence the election. Instead, the documentary and testamentary evidence reviewed by the OIG reflected that Comey's decision was a result of his consideration of the evidence that the FBI had collected during the course of the investigation and his understanding of the proof required to pursue a prosecution under the relevant statutes, end quote.

Mr. Strzok, is that conclusion consistent with your experience?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. So bias or an effort to influence the election was not part of the FBI's decisionmaking in any way.

Mr. Strzok. Correct.

Mr. Cicilline. Do you have any reason to believe that Director Comey's recommendations against prosecuting Hillary Clinton was influenced by any improper conversations, including political bias?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Was your opinion influenced by political bias?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Or was your opinion based on facts and evidence, as you've already stated?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. So I want to just turn just for a moment now, Mr. Strzok, to this whole notion of political bias. I know the suggestion has been made that the vast majority of the FBI and the agents that serve the FBI are Democrats and they are biased in favor of Democrats. Do you think that's a true statement?

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Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Are FBI agents and professionals such as yourself allowed to have personal political affiliations and opinions?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. When the FBI staffs a politically sensitive investigation -- for example, a public corruption case -- does the FBI requester the personal political persuasion of its agents in making those staffing decisions?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Why not?

Mr. Strzok. Because I don't know that it would be legal. That is not a consideration that is taken into account, in my experience, in staffing investigations.

Mr. Cicilline. And is it also not the expectation that an FBI professional, whether they have a political persuasion or opinion, will understand their obligation to separate that from their duties at the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. They will understand that, yes.

Mr. Cicilline. In fact, when the FBI puts together a team of investigators, is the consideration ever, I need a couple of Republicans or a couple of Democrats?

Mr. Strzok. Never.

Mr. Cicilline. Does the FBI ask about the political affiliations of its own agents?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Cicilline. And, in fact, is it explicitly forbidden for the FBI to ask about political affiliations for staffing investigations?

Mr. Strzok. That's my understanding, yes.

Mr. Cicilline. And how do FBI agents know not to let political bias interfere with their political work?

Mr. Strzok. Because it is engrained in everything we do. It is part of our training. It is part of the law. It is part of the code and culture of who we are.

Mr. Cicilline. And, in your experience, in your time at the FBI and with the Justice Department, have you seen evidence of anybody applying political bias in their investigation of any subject matter?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my knowledge, no.

Mr. Cicilline. Is there any reason to believe that Jim Comey's political affiliation affected the way he investigated Secretary Clinton's email server?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Cicilline. Now, the final area -- do I have time?

Ms. Kim. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. You indicated in response to some earlier questioning that you -- in responding to some of your -- describing some of your tweets, that you were contemplating some possibilities about the potential involvement of the Trump campaign or officials within the Trump campaign to have actively coordinated with Russian adversaries during the course of the Presidential election.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

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Mr. Cicilline. And I take it that any good investigator, as you're learning facts and conducting interviews and gathering evidence, part of your responsibility is to sort of contemplate possibilities.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. It helps you decide where to go and what additional evidence to look for.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. So you came at some moment in this investigation where the -- I think you described it as the gravest possibility -- you began to contemplate what you call the gravest possibility.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Cicilline. And what was the gravest possibility, as you saw it?

Mr. Strzok. The gravest possibility I saw, based on the allegation that Russia was colluding with members of the Trump campaign, the gravest possibility was that candidate Trump himself was engaged in collusion with the Government of Russia to gain the Presidency.

Mr. Cicilline. And I'd take it, as a national security professional, that if you saw evidence that proved that to be true, you would consider that to be worthy of removal from office.

Mr. Strzok. If that were true, I would, yes.

Mr. Cicilline. And without telling us the nature of the evidence in this setting, did there come a time during the course of this

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investigation that the reality that that grave description we just gave -- did you see evidence to support that claim?

Ms. Besse. I'm sorry, Congressman. If I may interrupt --

Mr. Cicilline. Do I have a choice?

Ms. Besse. For Mr. Strzok to answer that, it goes into, sort of, what he looked at during the investigation that's now under the purview of the special counsel. So I will instruct him not to answer that question.

Mr. Cicilline. Okay. Even if I -- I certainly respect that, and I'm not asking you in any way to comment on what you saw or the quality. I'm asking you to describe your state of mind after having done that.

Ms. Besse. His state of mind is going to be based on evidence that he was privy to and information that he knew --

Mr. Cicilline. Okay. I'll try something else.

As you spent time during the course of this investigation doing your work of interviewing witnesses, looking at evidence, did that grave example that you used, as you would consider the gravest, most dangerous thing, did you develop more or less concern that that was a possibility?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, I think that would also --

Mr. Cicilline. I'm going to ask a much more skilled staffer to help me.

Mr. Goelman. I don't know that it's a matter of skill. It's the question.

BY MS. KIM:

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Q Mr. Strzok, I'd like to touch quickly on a letter coming out of the Senate today. So Senator Lindsey Graham sent a letter to the Deputy Attorney General. I am asking the questions that are being posed to the DOJ today.

A Uh-huh.

Q So he asked: Did you, Mr. Strzok, have any role in retaining or supervising the confidential informant who Lindsey Graham characterizes as targeting the Trump campaign and Trump associates at the beginning of the Russia probe?

A I can answer that, but my concern goes to a point that was made earlier, that, by answering that, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. And I don't know that that's a path that we can go down.

Ms. Besse. I'm sorry. Is that a letter that was drafted to go out -- or went out today?

Ms. Kim. It has gone out today, yes.

Ms. Besse. So the FBI would have to look at that and make a decision as to how and if it can respond to that. So I don't think that Mr. Strzok can respond to that.

Ms. Kim. I understand. Let me try to phrase it in a more general way.

Mr. Strzok, have you had any role in instructing a confidential informant to infiltrate or investigate a major Presidential campaign?

Ms. Besse. Again, if it's based on his involvement in a specific investigation, he will not be able to answer that question.

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Ms. Kim. I understand the FBI's equities. The concern that I have is that, by not being able to clarify that he has never participated in the infiltration of the campaign, his good name is unnecessarily being dragged through the mud.

Mr. Cicilline. Can I just say one thing? If, for sake of argument, the answer to that were "no," then it's clearly not revealing anything about an investigation because it's a fact that didn't happen. So I think if the answer is "no," you can answer "no" without having to comment on an ongoing investigation.

Ms. Kim. And one more thing I'll raise is I am rephrasing almost exactly a question I asked earlier to which Mr. Strzok was allowed to respond.

Mr. Goelman. Was allowed to respond?

Ms. Kim. He was indeed.

Mr. Goelman. Can we just have one moment?

Ms. Kim. Yes.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Kim. I think we'll go back on the record. It's 6:00 p.m.

BY MS. KIM:

Q Mr. Strzok, have you ever been a part of the FBI's efforts to infiltrate a U.S. political campaign?

A No.

Q Have you ever been a part of an effort to put a spy in a U.S. political campaign?

A No.

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Q I think if that's the best we can do, you've given those answers, and I have no reason to doubt that you are --

Mr. Cicilline. Can I add one thing?

To your knowledge, at the time that you were at the Bureau, have you ever heard of that happening?

Mr. Strzok. No. No, I do not have personal knowledge of that happening?

Ms. Kim. Did you have any role in reviewing, approving, or supplying information for the FISA warrant obtained to surveil Carter Page?

Mr. Strzok. I think we've asked and been unable to answer that in the past?

Ms. Besse. Yes. I think how it was phrased earlier was about whether you signed --

Ms. Kim. An affidavit.

Ms. Besse. Right. So may we confer?

Ms. Kim. Sure. Certainly.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Kim. We will go back on the record. It is 6:01.

Mr. Goelman. The witness has been instructed by counsel for the agency not to answer that question, and we'll abide by that direction.

Ms. Kim. Thank you very much.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Raskin.

Mr. Raskin. Thank you very much.

Mr. Strzok, the criticism of you seems to come down to the

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suggestion that the few texts that were identified somehow reflected a general conspiracy that was going on to fix the Presidential contest. Was there any political conspiracy at the FBI to alter the outcome of the election?

Mr. Strzok. Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. And do your texts reflect a conspiracy or an agreement between you and your close friend to alter the outcome of the election?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Raskin. Okay. Is all of this much ado about nothing?

Mr. Strzok. I believe so, yes.

Mr. Raskin. Do you view it as a massive distraction and red herring?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know that I'm ready to, kind of, go through what I think it is. I do believe, yes, it is absolutely a distraction and is not accurate in any way.

Mr. Raskin. Okay.

When we first got some portion of the texts that were disclosed to us by the Department of Justice, I noticed that there were these offhand political slams, I suppose I would call them, directed not just at President Trump but at Eric Holder, I think Hillary Clinton. I think my friend Martin O'Malley came in for some hits. Bernie Sanders I think was described at one point as an idiot, which was a word that was also used for President Trump.

Even at the informal level of personal banter, which your texts

about the President appeared to me, would you agree that you were making the same kinds of offhanded casual comments about other political figures that people do in friendships all the time?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Raskin. And even within the paranoid view of these texts as relating to, you know, some kind of ongoing belief system, if we accepted that, we would have to accept that basically the dialogue reflects a general irreverence or a general skepticism about politicians. Isn't that right?

Mr. Strzok. That's fair.

Mr. Raskin. Okay.

And as I read the dialogue, it could have appeared in the texting history of probably tens of millions of American. I mean, even the most damning nuggets that your critics have seized upon, things like "he's an idiot," could probably be found in tens of millions of texts.

I mean, I suppose you're no expert on that, but would you agree that the things that were said were said in the course of general political vernacular that people speak to with their friends?

Mr. Strzok. I do agree.

Mr. Raskin. Okay.

Okay. That's all I've got. Thanks.

Ms. Kim. We will be going off the record now. It is 6:06.

[Recess.]

[6:12 p.m.]

Chairman Goodlatte. We'll go back on the record at 6:12 p.m.

Agent Strzok, you were asked earlier who made -- if you made the decision on how to classify the Midyear Exam investigation, and you said that you did not. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Mr. Chairman, that's correct.

Chairman Goodlatte. Who did make that decision?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know. That was done before I joined the case, and it would have been somebody at headquarters. But I don't know who did that.

Chairman Goodlatte. Who was in charge of the case at headquarters?

Mr. Strzok. My understanding was that it was run out of the Counterintelligence Division initially. Section Chief Sandy Kable had that effort and he had folks in his section working on it. At the time, he reported to Randy Coleman, who was Bill Priestap's predecessor, and then the chain, the deputy at the time was Mark Giuliano. The EAD, I don't know who that was at the time.

Chairman Goodlatte. Who ordinarily would make that classification?

Mr. Strzok. Ordinarily, if -- well, because it was at headquarters, that is hard to answer. In the field, ordinarily that would be the case agent and the supervisory special agent on the squad that was opening the case.

At headquarters, that would typically -- I don't think there's a

typically when it's at headquarters.

Chairman Goodlatte. Now, on the Trump-Russia investigation, who was the subordinate supervisor to you that you referenced earlier?

Mr. Strzok. There were a couple of them. There was a supervisory special agent. There was a supervisory intelligence analyst. Jon Moffa and I, as we did in Midyear, kind of had parallel roles, but we were, for the Russia influence investigations, kind of at a higher level. But there was both the supervisory special agent and the supervisory intelligence analyst.

Chairman Goodlatte. Now, I want to talk to you about your communications with Lisa Page.

Earlier you were asked whether you didn't think that some of the expressions you made involving various obscene comments about Donald Trump were hateful. I think you said you wouldn't call them that. You would call them a reflection of personal belief in a private conversation.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. So do you not believe that you can make a statement of personal belief in a private conversation that is of a hateful nature?

Mr. Strzok. Well, I do believe you can make a statement in a private conversation that is of a hateful nature.

Chairman Goodlatte. So would you characterize the statements that you made about Donald Trump in the private conversation as being hateful?

Mr. Strzok. I would not.

Chairman Goodlatte. Why would you not?

Mr. Strzok. Because my -- when I think -- when you ask me what it means for me to hate somebody, I do not hate President Trump. That's -- in my mind, that is reserved for something entirely different from that.

I would characterize these, again, as I did before, private expressions of personally held belief, certainly emotive, certainly charged, but not hateful.

Chairman Goodlatte. Now, you were asked about a text in which you referenced being in a place where there were Trump supporters, and how did you characterize them?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I think I characterized them as earlier is that I was struck by the difference in the way political support existed in a constituency in southern Virginia so radically different from the same State just 100 miles away that was of vastly different character.

Chairman Goodlatte. You said you could smell.

Mr. Strzok. Oh, yes, sir, I did say that.

Chairman Goodlatte. And what does that mean?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I -- and, again, I appreciate Congressman Gowdy trying to dissect what that meant.

For me, that was a quick analogy. I'm typing a text. It was just as likely if I could have used "see" or "hear." It was not anything other than just it is strikingly apparent to me the level of Trump support here and how different that is from northern Virginia.

Chairman Goodlatte. Now, you talked about risking the source versus pursuing the investigation as an explanation for your text involving a reference to an insurance policy. Can you explain to me why you would be saying this to Ms. Page in the first place?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir, because she was -- my recollection from the text -- was part of a discussion that we had in the context of having received information from an extremely sensitive source, and that the debate -- one of the debates on how to pursue this information was how much risk to put that sensitive source in because, in my experience, the more aggressive an investigation, the greater chance of burning or compromising that source.

And the reason, I believe, I mentioned it to Ms. Page, and certainly from the context of the text in saying she threw it out, there was a kind of thought process or a set of -- a proposal by some that, look, the polls, the pundits, everybody, Republicans, Democrats, think it's very unlikely that candidate Trump would win the Presidency.

And because of that, some people were arguing these allegations of collusion, whatever they may or may not be in terms of accurate, it doesn't really matter as much because he's not going to get elected. So we can take, as many counterintelligence investigations do, 3, 4 years, because we have that time.

My argument back to those people advocating that was, look, we can't assume anybody, one or the other, is going to get elected, even if it's unlikely, even if it's unlikely that you're going to die before you're 40, even if it's unlikely that he, President -- then-candidate

Trump would be elected President. We need to do our job because the mission of the FBI, what the American people, what Congress, what candidate Trump expect is that we would go out and aggressively look at those allegations because, if he were elected, some of those people which might be wrapped up in those allegations might be placed in positions of significant authority and responsibility in the national security staffing of the White House.

Chairman Goodlatte. So you call that an insurance policy?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, that's an analogy that I use to try and say, when there is something unlikely that probably isn't going to happen, nevertheless you --

Chairman Goodlatte. Can you understand why somebody reading that would believe that the insurance policy was a way to stop Donald Trump from becoming President or preventing him from continuing on as President based upon improperly using the aggressive investigation that you refer to here?

Mr. Strzok. Mr. Chairman, I would tell you, one, it wasn't. And two, I think the most commonsense reading of that, particularly given my explanation, makes -- it is the most persuasive, simplest understanding of that, because it's true, and that it was not.

I know many people have said, you know, there's this inference, and many people can have many interpretations of it, but I'm -- I wrote it and I'm telling you what I meant.

Chairman Goodlatte. Did you ever have any conversations with Director Comey regarding these texts?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Chairman Goodlatte. At any time?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Chairman Goodlatte. Never.

Did you ever have any conversations with Lisa Page that are printed other than the ones that we have been -- have been made available to us?

Mr. Strzok. I don't understand your question, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. The question is, are there existing texts other than the ones that you and I both have been provided for in preparation for this?

Mr. Strzok. I believe there are texts that the inspector general is in the process of recovering. I don't have those and haven't seen them. But there is a -- my understanding, the FBI data systems had some sort of faulty software that did not preserve all the texts and that the IG is recovering some of those.

Mr. Goelman. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, can I have 1 minute?

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Strzok. Right. So, sir, would you re-ask the question?

Chairman Goodlatte. Yes. So the question is, are there other communications, written communications with Lisa Page, other than the ones that we are asking you about based upon documents produced to us and to you in preparation for today?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. My understanding is that the inspector general recovered texts that are purely of a personal nature that were not

produced to me, to FBI, and I don't believe they've been produced to the Hill.

Chairman Goodlatte. And who made the determination that they were of a personal nature?

Mr. Strzok. I don't know.

Chairman Goodlatte. You don't know. And was the inspector general involved in his office, or was it somebody at the FBI or somebody in the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. No. My belief is that the entirety of the texts were produced to the inspector general and the inspector general did the separation, but you'd have to ask him.

I also know that there has been a -- in the production kind of review to say, okay, you know, if there are things that are personal to redact it. But my understanding, but you'd have to ask the IG, is that the IG and his staff did that separation.

Chairman Goodlatte. Have you ever had conversations of the nature regarding, I call them reflecting animus, if not hatefulness, with regard to these communications with Ms. Page with any other person?

Mr. Strzok. I have had conversations with some close friends about my personal beliefs.

Chairman Goodlatte. Are they -- are these communications written?

Mr. Strzok. No. The ones --

Chairman Goodlatte. No texts with anybody other than Lisa Page?

Mr. Strzok. I have had communications, including texts with

friends, about personal topics, including my personal political beliefs.

Now, to, sir, to your question as of this nature, content, no.

Chairman Goodlatte. Reflecting what I would call -- you've decided to characterize it simply as a personal opinion, but personal opinions can be characterized by yourself and by others as reflecting an attitude, including a hateful attitude or an attitude of animus towards somebody. Have you done that?

Mr. Strzok. Not of the same nature, volume, no.

Chairman Goodlatte. All right.

Have you had conversations with other officials at the FBI regarding these texts?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Chairman Goodlatte. With whom?

Mr. Strzok. Then-Deputy Director McCabe, Associate Deputy Director Bowdich.

Chairman Goodlatte. Were these conversations before these texts became known to the public or after?

Mr. Strzok. These were before the texts became known to the public.

Chairman Goodlatte. Who else?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I'd have to think about it. What I'm -- what I'm -- the reason I'm pausing is there may be in the context of friends, whether or not discussing the fact that we had had these exchanged and, you know, reasons for returning to the FBI.

I remember speaking to both deputy director -- then-Deputy Director McCabe and associate -- then-Associate Deputy Director Bowdich in the context of the -- when I returned to the FBI and my placement in the Human Resources Division. But I can't give you a specific answer to whom else I might have discussed the texts with.

Chairman Goodlatte. How about after they were made public?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, the same answer. There were -- I could not give you a list of people. There were folks obviously who were aware of it. A large number of folks, you know, expressing support.

Chairman Goodlatte. Surely you must remember some of them.

Mr. Strzok. Sure, yes, I do. I mean, I remember a lot of people being very supportive and reaching out and saying, "Hey, hang in there," and things of that nature. So, yes, it was obviously very well publicized and known.

Chairman Goodlatte. So are there texts on personal devices that haven't been produced to the inspector general or to the Congress?

Mr. Strzok. Not that I am aware of, but I don't know where the --

Chairman Goodlatte. Whether they were personal or not?

Mr. Strzok. Not that I'm aware of, and I don't know the status of the IG's work.

Mr. Goelman. One second.

[Discussion off the record.]

Chairman Goodlatte. Are there texts or emails or other written communications with anyone else inside or outside the Department of Justice or the Federal Bureau of Investigation with whom you have had

a personal relationship of a nature similar to the relationship you have had with Lisa Page?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Chairman Goodlatte. None whatsoever?

Mr. Strzok. If you're implying an extramarital or romantic relationship?

Chairman Goodlatte. Correct.

Mr. Strzok. No.

Chairman Goodlatte. You were asked, I think by the minority, regarding FBI morale --

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. -- related to this. After the Comey announcement of the decision not to indict former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, were there expressions of low morale that you received from anybody in the Department related to that announcement and decision?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I wouldn't characterize it as low morale. I think it is absolutely fair to say that there were a significant number of agents who either disagreed or didn't understand the reasoning behind the decision not to charge her or with the decision to make a statement about it. But I would not characterize those concerns or questions, I would not at all equate those with low morale.

Chairman Goodlatte. And how about after the decision made by Director Comey to reopen the investigation and the announcement through a letter to me and others to reopen the investigation just days before

the Presidential election? What kind of expressions were made to you by others regarding their attitude toward that at that time?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall any specific statements. My general -- my recollection of the general sense was this case just keeps continuing, and it was neither a morale thing at all. I wouldn't even say it's positive or negative other than, oh, you know, wow, we're still here, still with this case. But that's a general sense, Mr. Chairman, not a specific text or any conversation.

Chairman Goodlatte. You indicated that you were surprised and stunned by the firing of Director Comey.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Chairman Goodlatte. Did you ever speak to the deputy attorney general or anyone in his office regarding your reaction to the deputy attorney general's comments reinforcing the decision to terminate Director Comey?

Mr. Strzok. Not to my recollection.

Chairman Goodlatte. Did you review those comments by the deputy attorney general?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I read them, if you're talking about his -- the material that he provided to the White House that was used and released in the context of the reasoning for the firing for Director Comey.

Chairman Goodlatte. Correct.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I read them.

Chairman Goodlatte. And what was your reaction to that?

Mr. Strzok. My reaction -- I had two reactions, Mr. Chairman.

The first was the kind of independent assessment of the deputy attorney general about the precedential nature of what Director Comey had done and his assessment of that and whether or not I thought that was a valid assessment.

And then my second reaction was, particularly in the face of the statements by President Trump to Lester Holt, to Russian diplomats, that the reason he had fired Mr. Comey had nothing to do with the rationale in the deputy attorney general's letter and everything to do with the Russia investigations gave me great pause about what the reasoning truly was behind Director Comey's firing.

Chairman Goodlatte. Getting back to this issue regarding Trump, you can smell the Trump supporters, what are the different demographics between northern Virginia and southern Virginia that would allow you to smell that difference?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, again, smell, smell is the analogy that I pulled. It could easily have been seen, heard.

What I observed from my very quick text, which was not at all a scientific description, was that my observation was the area that I was in, in central-southern Virginia, was almost exclusively and very demonstrably pro-Trump, from the number of signs in front of homes and bumper stickers, and was very much different from my experience here in northern Virginia where it was a much more evenly split population.

And my observation was simply, we're the same State, we're 100 or however many miles apart, and it is radically different, and just that was striking to me.

Chairman Goodlatte. Now, you also testified earlier that the existence of these texts could never have been used to blackmail you. Why do you say that?

Mr. Strzok. Because, sir, I am not -- my sense of duty, my devotion to this Nation, if you or anybody else came to me and said, "Pete, I'm aware of your extramarital affair and I have all these texts and I am going to do whatever it is unless you do this," I would not do that; that my love of country and my sense of who I am could not be bought, let alone bought by something like this that, again, I absolutely regret, that caused extraordinary pain to my family. But the notion that something like that could be used to turn me against my country is absurd.

Chairman Goodlatte. Isn't that a very common consideration by not just the Department of Justice and the FBI when they do background checks on all kinds of applicants for all kinds of positions all across our government?

Mr. Strzok. It is a consideration, but I would say a couple of things.

One, in my experience, successful recruitments, whether by the United States or whether by a foreign adversary, has rarely been in my experience through blackmail about an affair. It occurs but it's not frequent.

The other thing, I'm maybe being a little cynical, but if you look at the number of people in the government who have or are having affairs, I would think that would cast some problems with your proposition.

Chairman Goodlatte. Well, not with the impact of it, because, obviously, that's why these questions are asked.

If you were asked that question for review for a new position with the government, a promotion or a transfer to another agency or department or appointment to a position that required confirmation by the United States Senate, how would you have answered that question? It's on every form.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I would answer is, truthfully, and I would to the extent that it -- and I don't know. I would have to review the SF-86 form to see how that's worded -- but certainly with regard to, you know, your hypothetical of a confirmation hearing to say what I said here: I deeply regret the relationship, the affair, and the pain that it's caused my family, and I always will. And I take responsibility for that. And I am seeking to make amends and make things right where I've caused pain in my personal life.

Chairman Goodlatte. Would you acknowledge that that would be grounds for suspending a security clearance?

Mr. Strzok. I don't think it would be grounds for suspending a security clearance. I think it is one of a mosaic--

Chairman Goodlatte. Really?

Mr. Strzok. I think it is one of a mosaic of factors that would be taken into account.

Sir, I am personally familiar with a number of individuals who have had extramarital affairs who retain -- after knowledge of that has become known -- who've retained their clearances. So it is a factor,

but it is not the sole determinant factor.

Chairman Goodlatte. So what would you say are those other factors?

Mr. Strzok. I think there are a host. And again, I'm not a -- the people who do security clearances have a -- are very professional and they have a set of guidelines.

But I think a wide variety of things from -- I don't even want to speculate down the list. But financial exposure, alcoholism, gambling problems, there are a host of things that go into the consideration about the determination to grant a clearance.

Chairman Goodlatte. So are you a registered voter in the Commonwealth of Virginia?

Mr. Strzok. I'm an independent, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. But you're registered to vote?

Mr. Strzok. This question came up earlier. I am registered to vote. And what I couldn't recall in Virginia is whether or not you have to register as an independent to not --

Chairman Goodlatte. There's no party registration in Virginia. I know that very well.

Mr. Strzok. I believe -- I will --

Chairman Goodlatte. So no party registration, but you are registered to vote in Virginia?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. Okay. So do you generally vote in elections?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I do.

Chairman Goodlatte. Consistently?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Chairman Goodlatte. General elections and primaries?

Mr. Strzok. General elections certainly; primaries, it varies.

Chairman Goodlatte. Important primaries, like Presidential primaries?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Chairman Goodlatte. Did you vote in the Presidential primary in 2016?

Mr. Strzok. I did.

Chairman Goodlatte. And which party did you cast a vote in?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I see a bedrock of our democracy being the privacy of an individual's vote, and I don't think it's appropriate at all.

Chairman Goodlatte. I didn't ask who you voted for; I asked you which primary you voted in.

Mr. Strzok. I actually -- because, again, you would know better than I. I don't know if Virginia -- I think you may be allowed to vote in both, but I don't recall.

Chairman Goodlatte. No, you're not allowed to vote in both. You have to pick.

Mr. Strzok. Yes. And I don't recall. If I voted, I believe I voted in the Democratic primary because I did not vote in the Republican primary. But I'm not certain I voted in the Democratic primary.

Chairman Goodlatte. Yet earlier you said you were considering voting for John Kasich.

Mr. Strzok. I was.

Chairman Goodlatte. All right. But if you decided to vote in the Democratic primary, John Kasich would not have been on the ballot in that primary.

Mr. Strzok. That's right.

Mr. Goelman. Was he still in the race?

Mr. Strzok. Yeah. I don't know if he was -- yeah, sir, that's a good question. I don't know if Governor Kasich was in the race at the time of the primary or not.

Chairman Goodlatte. All right. In a Supreme Court case handed down just last year, the court reviewed whether statements made by a juror that indicated racial bias required the piercing of jury deliberations.

Justice Kennedy wrote the opinion of the court holding that racial bias exhibited by a juror provided an exception to the rule that jury deliberations must remain confidential because it is necessary to ensure that our legal system remains capable of coming ever closer to the promise of equal treatment under the law that is so central to a functioning democracy.

On several occasions you have referenced that the texts, in your questions, were simply personal opinions exchanged with a close confidant and in no way reflected your intent to act on your opinions. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. Yet, if you made these statements while on a jury, it is hard to imagine that you would not be kicked off immediately because of the risk that your bias would undermine a functioning democracy, to quote Justice Kennedy.

Do you still hold that personal opinions, even in the face of this Supreme Court precedent, should not have tainted your involvement in any investigation relating to Secretary Clinton or President Trump?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I don't think that Supreme Court decision applies at all. I think you're talking about apples and oranges. I think the Supreme Court decision is talking about opinions about protected classes, race, religion, sexual orientation, things that by law you must not take into account.

I see that as entirely different from political belief, which is not only specifically enumerated in the First Amendment, saying you're entitled to it, but that this very body held in passing the Hatch Act that there are things which in the interest of a functioning government you're not allowed to do, and anything else not only is allowed, but it's encouraged.

So when it comes to political opinion, that is something that our Nation, through the Constitution, has said we, unless specifically prohibited, want to encourage everybody, government employee or not, to engage in, which is very, very different from a protected class of race, sexual orientation, gender, or anything else.

And one more thing, sir. I disagree with you. You've said just

now and before that you make this equivalence that political opinion equals bias, and I couldn't disagree more. I have political opinions. I do not have bias, because bias implies act, and I have never acted on the basis of any of my political opinion.

Chairman Goodlatte. So you're sitting in a jury box and there's a lawsuit involving President Trump and you have before you -- or candidate Trump before, because most of this occurred before he was elected President, right, most of the comments you made he was not President of the United States -- you have an attorney before you who reads to the judge the comments that you've made repeatedly over many months' period of time reflecting what some of us would characterize as hatefulness or an animus, and you do not think that that judge would order you struck from that jury?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I don't want to -- I can't put myself in the hypothetical of what would happen in that event. In the context of if that same attorney had followed each of the jurors home and listened to their conversations over a backyard barbecue where they discussed --

Chairman Goodlatte. No, that didn't happen here.

Mr. Strzok. But this is the analogy, sir.

Chairman Goodlatte. No.

Mr. Strzok. If they were to get those personal opinions and read the thinking -- everybody has a personal opinion, sir, whether you're -- in your mind or writing it --

Chairman Goodlatte. Everybody has a personal opinion. Everybody has a personal opinion. But the personal opinion is weighed

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by the court to determine whether or not they can give a fair and impartial decision in a case that's before them.

Do you believe that a judge, acting in those circumstances, would view the comments that you made -- and knowing that you made them in private, not thinking they would ever be made public -- that judge would leave you on that jury?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I can't answer that question.

Chairman Goodlatte. Okay. Thank you. Those are all the questions I have.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Agent Strzok, I was asking you about when the decision was made not to charge Hillary Clinton. And we were talking about a text exchange between you and Lisa Page on July the 1st where she related that the Attorney General was hardly a profile in courage since she knows she -- meaning Hillary Clinton -- is not going to be charged. Do you recall that?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. As it turns out, the very next day, July 2nd, is the day that Hillary Clinton was interviewed, correct?

Mr. Strzok. I believe the 2nd or 3rd, but the 2nd sounds right, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Saturday, July the 2nd?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And you were part of that interview team?

Mr. Strzok. I was.

Mr. Ratcliffe. How many folks from the FBI and DOJ attended

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Secretary Clinton's interview?

Mr. Strzok. There were three from the FBI and there were five from DOJ.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Who were the three from the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. Me and two case agents.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Who were the five from the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. Dave Laufman, who's a section chief, and then four non-SES, two AUSAs from EDVA and two NSD attorneys.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So eight folks from the Department of Justice and the FBI?

Mr. Strzok. A total of eight, yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. A total of eight, okay.

Do you recall what prompted that text exchange earlier that week between you and Ms. Page?

Mr. Strzok. I think it was the -- it was the announcement by the then attorney general following -- I believe it was following the meeting she had had with President Clinton on the tarmac that she was going to accept the recommendations of the FBI as to the charging decision.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Right. And probably the most famous tarmac meeting that -- in American history.

Mr. Strzok. I'm not an expert on tarmac meetings, but it certainly was notable.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do you recall -- let's put it in context -- do you recall that Director Comey called that tarmac meeting a game changer,

the reason that he held a press conference without the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall him using -- I remember him saying the word "game changer." I don't recall -- he may well have said it in regard to that. I do know that it was a certainly very significant consideration in his --

Mr. Ratcliffe. Do you recall the attorney general testifying before Congress and admitting that that meeting cast a shadow over the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. I don't recall that, but I'll take your representation of it.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Well, do you recall a text exchange with Ms. Page that week where you described it as stupid, stupid, stupid on June the 30th?

Mr. Strzok. I think that's right, but I just want to read the context.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, regardless of what the text says, it's June the 30th.

Mr. Strzok. I think that's Lisa Page saying that, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Regard -- and my point about it being the most famous tarmac meeting, much of the country was speculating about what happened and what was said in that meeting.

Mr. Strzok. Yes, I was, too.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Got a lot of media attention?

Mr. Strzok. It did.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. And do you know what was said in that meeting?

Mr. Strzok. I don't.

Mr. Ratcliffe. So 5 days after that meeting, that I'll represent to you Jim Comey called a game changer and that the Attorney General said cast a shadow, you went in with eight folks from the Department of Justice to interview Mrs. Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. I went in with seven, but there were eight of us, yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. And that wasn't a recorded interview?

Mr. Strzok. That's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. All right. But we do have a 302?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. Have you had a chance to review the 302?

Mr. Strzok. Not recently, no, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. But at any point in time?

Mr. Strzok. Oh, yes, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. This is my only copy, so I'd like to get it back. But tell me where in that 302 there's a discussion with Hillary Clinton about the tarmac meeting.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, so this is the LHM summary of the investigation, not the 302. But I'll stipulate to you having a copy of the 302.

My recollection is that I would need to review that 302 to see if we asked about that or not. I don't recall whether we did or not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, you told me earlier, I asked you the question do you know what was said in that meeting, and you said no.

Mr. Strzok. I do not know what was said in that meeting.

Mr. Ratcliffe. I'll represent to you the 302 doesn't reference the word "tarmac" anywhere.

So my question to you is, if eight of the Department of Justice and FBI's truth seekers were in a room with Hillary Clinton about a meeting that everyone in the country was talking about that had happened 5 days earlier, why didn't she get asked a single question about the meeting between her husband and their boss at the Department of Justice?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I'm not certain that she wasn't. I would need to -- it may be the case, but I don't recall at this point. And I would need to look at the 302 and talk with the folks in the room to see whether or not we did and what she said and the reasoning behind it. I just don't remember that fact and whether or not it was asked about or not.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Again, you already told me that you don't know what was said in that meeting.

Mr. Strzok. I do not know what was said in the meeting on the tarmac, that's correct.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Okay. So if Attorney General Lynch talked to the subject's husband, Bill Clinton, about serving as the attorney general in the -- in a Clinton administration, how would we know that?

Mr. Strzok. I do not know how we'd know that, sir.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Well, they could have talked about that?

Mr. Strzok. I don't want to speculate. It's possible they could have talked about anything, but I have no idea what they did or didn't talk about.

Mr. Ratcliffe. But if they talked about anything, wouldn't it be reflected in the 302?

Mr. Strzok. Secretary Clinton was not part of that conversation. President Clinton was.

Mr. Ratcliffe. Yeah. If a question was asked -- what does the 302 do, for the benefit of the folks reading this transcript?

Mr. Strzok. 302 records the statements of the interview of the person being interviewed.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And would it record all of the topics covered?

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And if a topic included a discussion about a tarmac conversation between the subject's husband and the boss of five of the people that walked in that room, would that be in the 302?

Mr. Strzok. It would be.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And if it's not, would that reflect that no question was asked about that topic?

Mr. Strzok. That is a possible explanation for it. That's a hypothetical and that is --

Mr. Ratcliffe. What other explanation would there be?

Mr. Strzok. That's hard to answer. I would want to review that 302 and talk to the agents, because honestly, Congressman, I don't remember whether or not that was asked or not, sitting here now.

Mr. Ratcliffe. And if it wasn't?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, I would note to you the purpose of our investigation was to understand how classified information came to be

placed on her server. It was not to talk about the staffing of her administration. It was not to talk about the Clinton Foundation. It was not to talk about the price of tea in Chappaqua. It was to understand the circumstances by which she set up a private server and how classified information came to be placed on that server.

So our interview and the scope of that interview were -- was to address those concerns. And what we don't do if we're -- this is not -- this is very much a standard procedure. We're going to go into that interview to ask the matter about which we are investigating. If we have allegations of another crime, of course, we might ask about that.

But at this point, the optics of a what I believe to be a very ill-advised meeting on the tarmac were not indicia of illegal activity. So for us to get into a discussion, as I think about it, we may have asked. You're saying we didn't. My sense is, if we did not ask, it's because it had nothing to do with the matter and facts we were investigating.

Mr. Ratcliffe. But you're telling us under oath that eight folks from the Department of Justice and FBI wouldn't think it was important to ask a question of the subject's husband having a meeting with their boss?

Mr. Goelman. Just for the record, he's not under oath, Congressman.

Mr. Strzok. I'm saying to you that the -- it is not at all true that we did not see it as important or relevant.

Mr. Ratcliffe. You just answered a question about it.

Mr. Strzok. Without, sir, without talking to the team about what the reasoning about asking that or not, I can't give you a definitive answer. My sense, and I'm doing the very dangerous thing of speculating, my sense is that we were focused on that interview on the facts at hand in the investigation.

But I would defer to talking to the team, because, again, it's been a couple of years and --

Mr. Jordan. Well, just a quick follow-up. I didn't plan on asking this. Was it more important than the price of tea in Chappaqua?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, good afternoon.

Yes, absolutely, it was more important. I don't know that, again, with regard to the relevance to the question as to why Secretary Clinton set up a private server and whether or not classified information came to be placed there, whether or not she knew that and her involvement.

Mr. Jordan. Did you ask about the price of tea in Chappaqua at the interview with Secretary Clinton?

Mr. Strzok. No, we did not.

Mr. Jordan. No, you didn't. But you can't tell us whether you asked about the fact that her husband just met with the Attorney General just 2 days before your interview?

Mr. Strzok. Congressman, what I'm saying to you is I don't recall asking about that and I don't know whether we did or didn't. If we did not, it was my assumption because we were focused on the gravamen of the case and the investigation.

Mr. Jordan. When did you first get a chance to look at the dossier?

Mr. Strzok. I think that's a -- I defer to FBI counsel as to whether or not I can answer that question.

Mr. Jordan. It's been -- the dossier -- the whole darn thing has been printed in the press. I just want to know when you first saw it.

Mr. Strzok. That's true, and that's a different question.

Ms. Besse. Congressman, what's printed in the press may not be accurate and may not be what he was privy to. So I would not allow him to answer that question.

Mr. Jordan. Have you read the dossier?

Mr. Strzok. I have.

Mr. Jordan. You have?

Mr. Strzok. I have, yes.

Mr. Jordan. When did you first read it?

Mr. Strzok. Again, that gets into a level of investigative detail about an ongoing investigation that I don't think the FBI or the special counsel want me to answer. I am happy to answer it, but I defer to what I think the appropriate FBI equities are in this regard.

Ms. Besse. Congressman, I would not allow him to answer that question because it gets into the special counsel's investigation.

Mr. Jordan. I'm not asking about the special counsel -- we've been through this -- I'm not asking about the special counsel investigation. I'm asking about what you all did in the Russia investigation that was launched in late July. I want to know when you first had access to the dossier and when you first looked at it.

Ms. Besse. The FBI investigation was subsumed into the special

counsel's investigation. So anything that Mr. Strzok did on the investigation while it was under the FBI's purview would still be a part of the special counsel investigation.

Mr. Jordan. Did you read it all at once, Mr. Strzok, or did you read it in parts?

Mr. Strzok. Again, sir, same answer. I don't think I can tell you about the timing and manner I read it without getting into details about the investigation.

I am happy -- there is a very straightforward answer that I'm happy to provide, but the FBI practice, which I believe and understand and support, is that we do not talk about ongoing investigations.

Mr. Jordan. Do you ever communicate with Christopher Steele?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, that's another question I would instruct the witness not to answer.

Mr. Jordan. All I'm asking is if he ever talked to him.

Ms. Besse. It goes into his responsibility as an agent on the investigation itself, so it would still --

Mr. Jordan. Did you ever talk to Glenn Simpson?

Chairman Goodlatte. Let me interrupt you, because I think this is very important.

We have an investigation going on here into the disparate handling of the Hillary Clinton investigation and the so-called Trump-Russia collusion investigation. And we're entitled to know answers, not about anything substantive found in that investigation, but we're entitled to have answers about how Mr. Strzok, who was a central player in that

investigation, handled his own responsibilities and what he did or didn't do, not related to the substance, but related to the process and form. And I think that this question is entirely appropriate.

Ms. Besse. Mr. Chairman, my position would still remain the same. Because while it is a part of your investigation, it does impact what the special counsel is doing. And we would have to confer with the special counsel in order to be able to appropriately respond to your question.

Chairman Goodlatte. What he -- whether or not he talked to somebody before the special counsel was even appointed?

Ms. Besse. He talked -- if he --

Chairman Goodlatte. We're not even asking what he talked to him about. We're just asking whether he talked to him.

Ms. Besse. Mr. Chairman, the fact that he would have talked to him would have been as a result of him being an investigator in that specific --

Chairman Goodlatte. Maybe, maybe not. Mr. Steele has been involved in other matters for the FBI, has he not?

Ms. Besse. And it would still go to whether -- again, if it is an ongoing or if the FBI has other investigations, I don't know that we can sort of confirm or deny any such thing. So I would still instruct him not to answer that question unless -- until we confer with the special counsel.

Chairman Goodlatte. Well, you can be sure we will. I would prefer not to involve the special counsel since we have --

Mr. Jordan. Agent Strzok --

Chairman Goodlatte. -- clearly attempted to stay away from that.

Mr. Jordan. Agent Strzok, who paid for the dossier?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, under guidance from agency counsel, I am not able to answer that question.

Mr. Jordan. The whole world knows who paid for it. I'm asking you, do you know who paid for it?

Mr. Strzok. Again, under direction from agency counsel, I can't answer that question.

Ms. Besse. If Mr. Strzok learned that information as part of his duties investigating or being -- participating in the investigation, I would instruct him not to answer.

Chairman Goodlatte. So is it the position of the Department of Justice under Federal investigation that you're going to stonewall answers to questions that do not go to the substance of Mr. Mueller's work?

Because we have, for months now, investigated what the events were leading up to that without ever asking questions about the investigation has found with regard to Trump-Russia collusion.

Ms. Besse. Mr. Chairman, I'm not in a position to really tell you what will or will not impact Mr. Mueller's investigation since I'm not part of that. So I cannot have the witness answer questions that may impact the investigation without knowing for sure from the special counsel that it will not impact --

Chairman Goodlatte. So if Mr. Jordan asks the witness, "Have you

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ever met Robert Mueller?" are you going to allow him to answer that question?

Ms. Besse. Yes, because Mr. Mueller was also once the FBI Director.

Chairman Goodlatte. Right. So the question that we just asked was related to an individual who has worked for the FBI for many years. Why can't he answer that question?

Ms. Besse. I don't believe that individual was an employee. Mr. Mueller and Mr. Steele are in two different levels, so I would not compare the two.

Mr. Jordan. Agent Strzok, ever communicate with Glenn Simpson?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I think it's the same answer.

Mr. Jordan. It's not even close. It is not even close. Christopher Steele was -- hang on, if you could, Mr. Chairman, please -- it's not even close.

Glenn Simpson is not former MI6. Glenn Simpson is a journalist. Did you ever talk to Glenn Simpson?

Mr. Strzok. May I answer that question?

Ms. Besse. May we confer?

Chairman Goodlatte. Yes. I just want to say, and I'm going to leave because I've got to go somewhere else, but all of these questions will be raised with the Director and with the deputy attorney general of the United States tomorrow morning if we're not getting answers today.

Ms. Besse. Sure, Mr. Chairman.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Besse. Congressman, any questions that relate to Mr. Strzok's involvement in the investigation in the Russian collusion that's under the purview of the special counsel I will instruct him not to answer.

Of course, if the Director or the deputy attorney general make a different decision or the special counsel makes a different decision then we can answer those questions. But for right now, I will instruct the witness not to answer as it relates to that ongoing investigation.

Mr. Jordan. Did you ever talk to Bruce Ohr?

Chairman Goodlatte. Let me say one more thing. So we're going to have this discussion publicly or privately with those individuals, and we will subpoena Mr. Strzok to return and answer the questions at a time that's appropriate because we feel very strongly we are entitled to his answers.

Mr. Jordan. Agent Strzok, did you ever talk to Bruce Ohr?

Mr. Strzok. On advice of agency counsel, I've been told not to answer that question.

Mr. Jordan. Holy cow. He works in the Justice Department.

Mr. Strzok. He does.

Mr. Jordan. Never talked to him?

Mr. Strzok. May I answer that question?

Ms. Besse. You can answer that question.

Mr. Strzok. I have.

Mr. Jordan. When?

Mr. Strzok. Without looking at my calendar, it would be difficult

for me to tell you. My recollection is I met him either two or three times in 2016 into 2017. I know I have not seen him in -- I have not seen him this year, but those three meetings I'd have to refer to my calendar.

Mr. Jordan. What'd you talk about?

Mr. Strzok. May I answer that question?

Ms. Besse. If the conversations did not involve anything relating to an ongoing or possible investigation.

Mr. Jordan. You talked to him in 2016 and 2017? What'd you talk about? You said three times.

Mr. Strzok. So, Congressman, let me refresh my recollection on that as I think about it and make sure I'm absolutely accurate about that.

Sir, so I talked to him in 2016 and 2017, as I indicated. And based on the direction of agency counsel, I cannot discuss the content of our discussions.

Mr. Jordan. Ever talk with Nellie Ohr?

Mr. Strzok. No. Agency counsel may get angry with me, but no.

Mr. Jordan. So you can answer that. She worked for Glenn Simpson, Fusion. You can tell me you didn't talk to her, but you can't tell me -- you won't answer whether you talked with Glenn Simpson.

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I was answering that question in the context of her being Bruce Ohr's wife.

Mr. Jordan. Well, I know she was Bruce Ohr's wife, but she also worked for Glenn Simpson and Fusion. You're saying you never talked

to her.

Mr. Strzok. I did say that, and that's accurate.

Mr. Jordan. All right.

I'll yield because we've only got 10 minutes. I'm going to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina, but I may want to jump back in.

Mr. Meadows. So let me go fairly quickly.

Towards the end of July 2016 there's a text message between you and Lisa Page talking about: Do you want me to reach out to Gurvais Grigg? Well, it says Gurvais. I assume it's Gurvais Grigg.

Mr. Strzok. My understanding, it's pronounced Gurvais.

Mr. Meadows. Huh?

Mr. Strzok. Gurvais.

Mr. Meadows. Okay. Yeah. So Gurvais Grigg, do you know who that is?

Mr. Strzok. I do.

Mr. Meadows. And so what is Mr. Grigg in charge of?

Mr. Strzok. At the time, I believe he was involved in the Bureau's interface with the election and the transition offices of folks --

Mr. Meadows. Electronic surveillance and so forth?

Mr. Strzok. No. No. At the time -- he does something currently with regard to that I think in the lab, but at the time he was -- the Bureau had an office set up to deal with initially both the nominees, and that whoever won the election, that then the FBI's interface for providing them briefings and things of that sort, he ran that effort, is my recollection.

Mr. Meadows. Yeah. So there was another text message and you said: Well, why should you reach out to him. And I think Lisa Page just says: We want to see if he has the five names already.

What would that be in reference to? Do you recall?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what's the date of those texts? I don't recall offhand.

Mr. Meadows. June -- July 29th, 2016. It's a redacted form, but in the redaction it would say: Or just ask if the names -- if he has the names already, was under the redaction on it.

Mr. Goelman. What time, Congressman?

Mr. Meadows. It would have been at 23:17:11, so 11:17 at night.

Mr. Strzok. So do you have a copy of the unredacted version?

Sir, so my recollection was that --

Mr. Meadows. Why would you be reaching out to him in regards to your investigation of either Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump? Why would you be reaching out to --

Mr. Strzok. It was not in regard to either of those investigations. My recollection in dealing with him was that we were providing and coordinating counterintelligence briefings to both of the candidates and their staffs, and part of that was determining who it was from the campaign that was going to receive those briefings. And because he had that role on kind of the transition team staff, he was the person that would know it.

My assumption -- and, again, this is only an assumption -- is it was redacted because it's irrelevant to either the Clinton investigation

or the Russian influence investigations.

Mr. Meadows. Yeah, and perhaps so. That -- since we don't have a privileged log, we wouldn't know that. But let me go on a little bit further.

You mentioned that you didn't show any bias because you didn't act on that, earlier. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, no. I don't think that's what I said. I said --

Mr. Meadows. So would you --

Mr. Strzok. I said I do not have bias, that political belief and opinion is something that is different and distinct from bias. And I don't agree with the analogy that if you have opinion, therefore you're biased that way.

And what I said about bias was in response to, well, what makes bias, and my belief that bias is when somebody is acting on those beliefs.

We all have political beliefs. Every one of us in this room.

Mr. Meadows. Sure.

Mr. Strzok. And that doesn't make us biased.

Mr. Meadows. So would you agree with the inspector general's report that you prioritized the Russia investigation over the Hillary Clinton investigation, would you agree or disagree with that?

Mr. Strzok. I disagree with that conclusion.

Mr. Meadows. So you didn't prioritize it?

Mr. Strzok. I did not prioritize in that it was not a binary decision. There was not a "I'm moving resources from this Clinton case

to this Trump case" or vice versa.

If I may, sir --

Mr. Meadows. So the 30-day window where you didn't look at the Anthony Weiner laptop was just because it wasn't -- it didn't float back up to the top?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I'm glad you asked that. What I would like to draw you to are the facts of what happened.

Mr. Meadows. No, I know the facts.

Mr. Strzok. Within hours of finding out about that --

Mr. Meadows. Hold on just a second, and I'll let you answer. I'll let you answer before your counsel takes back your mike. So if you can keep your answers succinct because we've got limited time.

Mr. Strzok. Yeah, absolutely, sir. I think -- I disagree with both the inspector general's broad suggestion and yours just now that I waited. If you look at what the record reflects --

Mr. Meadows. Mine was a question.

Mr. Strzok. -- it was an immediate action on my part to assign supervisors and their subordinate agents and analysts to follow up.

I did that within hours, and they followed up within hours. And they were left with at the time the understanding that New York would -- that the material was crashing, hadn't finished processing, and that New York was going to let them know when it happened.

My experience is that processing computer evidence is like black magic. It can take 2 days. It can take 2 months. And so I do not find that unreasonable at all.

Mr. Meadows. All right. So Mr. Pientka, Agent Pientka works for you. Is that how you say his name?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I don't want to get into non-SES personnel.

Mr. Meadows. Does he work for you? I mean, I'm giving you the name, and it showed up in some of your text messages. So does Mr. Pientka work for you? This is a confidential briefing of which that answer is critical. Does he work for you?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, the Director has not authorized us to acknowledge the names or to divulge names of agents or employees who are not at the SES level. So that specific question --

Mr. Meadows. But where in statute does it say that you have that ability to do that and keep that from Congress? Is there anywhere in statute that gives you the right to do that, counselor?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, it may not be in a statute, but I believe it's based on --

Mr. Meadows. Fine. All right. Let me go on a little bit further since we're out of time.

Mr. Pientka worked for you. I will make that assumption based on org charts and what we have. Are you aware of any time that 302s were modified, changed, or adapted?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I am --

Mr. Meadows. With regards to either investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, without making any representation about the names you were throwing out there, my experience is that every 302 in the course of being drafted is a collaborative effort between the people

who conducted that interview. And I -- it is the rare, unusual example of a 302 that is not edited and revised in the course of the drafting of that.

Mr. Meadows. There are allegations that you instructed Mr. Pientka to change 302 that would materially have altered either a prosecutorial or the lack thereof decision in that. Would you deny those claims?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I would say -- and I think I can answer your question without any specifics -- is I did not, have not, in the course of drafting any 302 make any change or do anything other than ensure that 302 was an accurate representation of the statements of the person being interviewed.

Mr. Meadows. Okay. The IC that started this, the intelligence community, the IC, under earlier questioning, you said you don't recall ever being told that there were anomalies in the metadata when they came in to alert you of the case or their concern about potential foreign invasion into the Hillary Clinton server. Is that correct?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, what I think I said is I do not recall being aware personally of that. I would not be the logical person on the team. We had a variety of forensic experts whose job it was --

Mr. Meadows. Right. But we have people --

Mr. Strzok. -- to look at things like that and that then they would bring that to my -- to the team, to Mr. Moffa have and my attention if there were anomalies or anything unusual or of note in the course of the investigation.

Mr. Meadows. But my understanding was you were in the initial meeting when they brought this to the attention of you and others, that you were in the initial meeting. And then the last contact they had with you was 10 minutes after the exoneration speech by Director Comey, that you called and called them back to say close out the case and give the proper paperwork for closing out the referral.

Is that not accurate?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I am -- I do not recall a meeting where the IC IG made any reference to changes in the metadata

Mr. Meadows. Mr. McCullough.

Mr. Strzok. What I can tell you, Congressman, is that our technical experts, any allegation of intrusion, any review of metadata that might be indicative of an act, was pursued by our technical folks, and I am very confident that they did that thoroughly and well. I am certainly unaware of anything that we did not pursue or had not pursued.

Mr. Meadows. Did you ever use devices, either your personal or your official devices, in a capacity to try to keep information from being detected from others?

Mr. Strzok. Yes, from my spouse.

Mr. Meadows. Okay. How about from others that might be willing to investigate at a later date?

Mr. Strzok. No.

Mr. Meadows. There are text messages which suggest that devices were used in such a way as to not allow them to be recoverable. And you're saying that that's not accurate?

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Mr. Strzok. I do not recall ever using it to prevent it from being recovered, any official work-type communication, to prevent it from being recovered, no.

Mr. Jordan. One quick question, Agent Strzok. When a FISA application is put together, what is the typical timeframe it takes to compile that application so that it's then ready to go to the FISA court?

Mr. Strzok. Again, my experience is that varies wildly. I've seen FISA applications go through within a day, and I've seen some literally take years.

COMMITTEE SENSITIVE

Mr. Jordan. And any -- any timeframe reference you can give us on the FISA application that was taken to the court to get the warrant for Carter Page; how long did that one take to put together? Was it a day, or was it a year?

Mr. Strzok. So, first off, I think any discussion of any specific FISA becomes classified, and then I'd defer to agency counsel if that's something that I'm --

Mr. Jordan. I'm not asking about specifics. Again, I'm asking how long did it take to put together?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I wouldn't -- I think it's threading close to classified information to talk about the timeframe for a specific FISA, but, one -- and I'd defer to agency counsel. I understand we're looking at a --

Mr. Jordan. Did you ever talk to George Papadopoulos?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, that's squarely in the realm of the area that agency counsel has directed me not to speak about.

Mr. Jordan. Thank you.

Mr. Meadows. So, Agent, let me go back. Are you aware of any surveillance, any confidential informants, confidential human sources, which obviously are two different things, that shared information with the FBI during the month of July?

Mr. Strzok. Yes. I'm aware of -- the Bureau term now, we had a variety over the years, but current term is "confidential human sources." I think you're talking about human sources. Yes, I'm aware

of CHSes who provided information to the Bureau in the month of the July. I assume you mean '16, but every July.

Mr. Meadows. 2016, yes. Thanks.

Mr. Strzok. Yes.

Mr. Meadows. So, at that point, was there an ongoing investigation that we now know as "crossfire hurricane"? Was that ongoing at that point?

Mr. Strzok. It in late -- well, two things, sir. I am not going to comment on the name of what that investigation may or may not have been because, again, that's classified.

Mr. Meadows. I think the FBI leaked it to the New York Times, but we'll leave it at that. So whatever it may be.

So, at this point, you are saying that there were confidential human sources, plural, that you had information from during the month of July?

Mr. Strzok. Sir, I want to say this, and I know nobody in this Chamber would ever take anything out of context and repeat it in the media, but to be very clear, of the thousands of cases that I had oversight responsibility of, I was aware in those thousands of cases --

Mr. Meadows. I'm talking specifically --

Mr. Strzok. -- there were CHSes providing information. I am not making any representation whatsoever whether or not there were CHSes providing information about the Russian influence investigation.

Mr. Meadows. Well, obviously, that's where you were the lead investigator --

Mr. Strzok. I know it clearly is not --

Mr. Meadows. -- and it seemed like it was going, so let me go ahead and make that distinction. In the month of July, was there any information from confidential human sources given to you as it relates to the Russia investigation?

Mr. Strzok. Following advice of counsel, I can't answer that question. It's answerable, but I, under advice of agency counsel, I can't answer that.

Mr. Meadows. Did you get any of that in June?

Mr. Strzok. Again, same answer.

Mr. Meadows. All right. Did you ever give information to Christopher Steele?

Mr. Strzok. Same answer.

Mr. Meadows. What do you mean "same answer"?

Mr. Strzok. Same answer. Under direction by agency counsel, I can't answer that question.

Mr. Meadows. And what reason is that? Counsel?

Ms. Besse. Congressman, anything that relates to an ongoing investigation that's --

Mr. Meadows. Well, I would like to point out to the counsel that the investigation I'm asking about concluded because there's a new investigation. The special counsel actually started a new independent investigation -- investigation, mind you. And so the investigation I'm talking about was the one that actually concluded, so are you maintaining the same argument?

Ms. Besse. Which investigation are you saying concluded, Congressman?

Mr. Meadows. Well, obviously, the investigation that Mr. Strzok was the lead investigator on. He's no longer the lead investigator of an investigation. We have a new independent counsel that is doing a separate investigation, counterintelligence investigation. So, at this point, are you suggesting that everything is off limits if Mr. Mueller happens to be looking at anything that Peter Strzok has done?

Ms. Besse. My understanding is that it was not concluded. It was subsumed into the special counsel investigation. So it is -- it's not that it ended and another one began. That same information became a part of the special counsel investigation. So I would instruct the witness not to answer.

Mr. Breitenbach. Time is done.

[Whereupon, at 7:22 p.m., the interview continued in classified session.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

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