

Lawyer Immediately Claws Back Trump's Offer to Answer Mueller Questions "Under Oath"

President says he would "love" to be interviewed by Special Counsel in coming weeks, but lawyers forced to quickly clarify

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*Letting slip exactly the kind of unscripted and [potentially reckless utterance a legal team might fear](#), **President Donald Trump** told reporters late Wednesday that he would "love to" be interviewed by **Special Counsel Robert Mueller's** team and would so "under oath"—an offer his lawyer later appeared to pull back when he said Trump was "speaking hurriedly" and only meant that he would submit to an interview, but not necessarily under sworn oath or to the grand jury Mueller has convened.*

"I would love to do it, and I would like to do it as soon as possible," Trump said from the White House. "I would do it under oath, absolutely."

With reports this week indicating Mueller's team is now in serious talks with the president's lawyers about setting a date to answer questions, Trump on Wednesday denied to reporters that he or his campaign team did anything wrong.

"There's been no collusion whatsoever," he said. "There's no obstruction whatsoever, and I'm looking forward to [the interview]."

Here's an extended portion of his remarks:

Pres. Trump told reporters he is "looking forward" to speaking with Robert Mueller and would be willing to do so under oath. <https://t.co/o9B2eLgxLv>
[pic.twitter.com/yAOmNQJokl](https://t.co/o9B2eLgxLv)

— ABC News (@ABC) [January 25, 2018](#)

During the exchange, Trump asks reporters whether or not Hillary Clinton testified under oath, though it's not clear exactly what testimony of his 2016 campaign rival he's referring to. However, according to the New York Times' **Maggie Habberman**—the reporter who asked him about taking an oath—it was also unclear whether or not the president understands the possible stakes when he talks to Mueller:

Potus, obsessed with Clinton still, asked me in response to my q about under oath whether she did to the FBI. He doesn't seem to know that lying to the FBI

even without being under oath is a crime. Perhaps Flynn can tell him <https://t.co/xwr24iXn8Z>

— Maggie Haberman (@maggieNYT) [January 24, 2018](#)

[According](#) to the *Washington Post*:

Trump's remarks took White House officials by surprise and came as his lawyers were negotiating with Mueller's team on a potential interview. The president's lawyers have repeatedly encouraged him not to post tweets or make comments about the investigation without their knowledge, saying such comments could damage him.

The president's statements suggest that he sees an obstruction-of-justice investigation as an unfair attack on attempts by him or others to mount a defense. It is not a crime for the subject of a criminal probe to assert their innocence or provide additional information to exonerate themselves. However, if a person takes steps to impede or stop such an investigation, that can amount to obstruction of justice.

Of course, given that Trump is a documented serial liar, there was immediate reaction about what it would and wouldn't mean for the president to say he would testify under oath:

I can't fathom why anyone would think it means anything that Trump said he is looking forward to talking to Mueller under oath. It means nothing. <https://t.co/CFGlyq4pdj>

— Elizabeth de la Vega (@Delavegalaw) [January 25, 2018](#)

Trump made over 2,100 false or misleading statements last year according to the [@washingtonpost](#). Now [@realDonaldTrump](#) will potentially be placed under oath to answer questions about Flynn and Comey firings. <https://t.co/3y0pP3IS5g>

— Ted Lieu (@tedlieu) [January 23, 2018](#)

Soon after Trump's comments on Wednesday went public, his attorney **Ty Cobb** told the *Times* the president was speaking hurriedly and only intended to say he was willing to meet.

"He's ready to meet with them, but he'll be guided by the advice of his personal counsel," Mr. Cobb said.

[Writing](#) for *New York Magazine*, columnist **Jonathan Chait** explained why Cobb and other members of Trump's legal team might be concerned.

"The reason Trump's lawyers have been hesitant to let him talk to Mueller,

except under tightly controlled circumstances,” writes Chait, “is that he [lies like crazy](#) when he can be easily caught, and also occasionally blurts out admissions he shouldn’t make. His extemporaneous offer is good evidence of why the Trump legal team wants to keep him away from Mueller.”

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