

Transcript: ABC News' George Stephanopoulos' exclusive interview with President Trump

The unedited transcripts of the president's exclusive interview with ABC News.

By ABC News

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Trump says he may not alert FBI if info is offered by foreigners on 2020 candidates

In an exclusive interview with ABC News' Chief Anchor George Stephanopoulos, Trump said if a foreign entity reached out, "I think you might want to listen. There's nothing wrong with listening."

ABC News

Over the course of two days, ABC News' chief anchor George Stephanopoulos spent 30 hours with President Donald Trump, flying on Air Force One to Iowa, traveling in his armored vehicle called "The Beast," greeting him in his West Wing residence, embedding in the Oval Office for a day of meetings, and sitting down for a one-on-one interview in the White House Rose Garden. This aired in a special edition of "20/20," "President Trump - 30 Hours," on Sunday, June 16, 2019.

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Below are the unedited transcripts of the president's exclusive interview with ABC News from "The Beast" between events in Iowa, the walk to and in the Oval Office and the Rose Garden.

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PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Good event. Nice event. ... (inaudible) ethanol in there. Great crowd, great people. Great people.

STEPHANOPOULOS: This was-- you feel like this is your (inaudible)?

TRUMP: Yeah, I-- I do. I feel it's really-- really a great part of the country for us. Yeah.

STEPHANOPOULOS: This was the first state you ever (inaudible).

TRUMP: That's right. And I came in second. Should have come in first. But this was a caucus state. It was a whole different thing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Organization.

TRUMP: In the-- (inaudible). And I learned more in Iowa because we actually should have won Iowa easily by anywhere from five to 10 points. But caucus is different. People walk in. You talk to them. You know, it's-- it's like--

(OVERTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And they have to show up that night--

TRUMP: Look at the people. These are the people that couldn't get in, by the way. These people couldn't get in. Great people. It's a lot of-- Look at the-- look-- look at the people. They can't get in, George. A little different than my competitors.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, you don't have a real competitor. Just Bill Weld on the Republican side.

TRUMP: No, I'm talking about competitors, just generally.

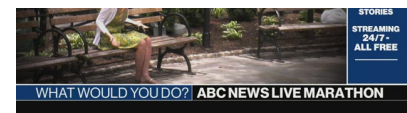
STEPHANOPOULOS: So you feel good about Iowa right now?

TRUMP: Yeah, feel great about Iowa. Feel great about I think virtually every state that we're competing in. I think Iowa's great. I think Ohio and Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina. Pennsylvania I feel really good about. You know, we won--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You're saying--

TRUMP: --Pennsylvania. And it was interesting because Pennsylvania's always been tough to win, but we won it. And-- I think we should be doing great because of steel and all of the jobs that we've produced. They're having the best year they've had in I think 40 or 50 years.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You said Vice President Biden's making a mistake not telling people what you're for. I take that point. What-- elections are about tomorrow, not yesterday. When you go to voters over this next year, what is the big unfinished piece of business you're going to say, "This is what we're going to get done?"



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TRUMP: So we almost had health care done. Health care's a disaster, Obamacare. But we've managed it much better than they managed it. So we've made it serviceable, but it's not great. We almost had it done. We were one vote off, as you know. You know that whole story. And that was a very-- unfortunate situation. We would have had great health care. So we're going to do that if we win the House. If we win back the House, we're going to produce phenomenal health care. And we already have the concept of the plan, but it'll be less expensive than Obamacare by a lot. And it'll be much better health care--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Don't you have to tell people what the plan is?

TRUMP: Yeah, well, we'll be announcing that in about two months. Maybe less. So, yeah, sure you do. But-- but, again, that's-- that's subject to winning back the House, Senate and the presidency. You need the three. But we are--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Because that was one of the big issues that the vice president-- former vice president took on today. He said on health care you've called-- gone to the courts and said, "We've got to overturn Obamacare." That's abandoning people with preexisting conditions.

TRUMP: Well, no. Preexisting conditions-- I was for preexisting conditions. And I still-- you know, I'm very much for preexisting conditions. But Obamacare has been a disaster. Look what--

(OVERTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: --get charged higher under your plan, right?

TRUMP: No, much lower. Under my plan, they'll be much lower. You'll see that in a month when we-- when we-- introduce it. We're going to have a plan. That's subject to winning the House, Senate, and presidency, which hopefully we'll win all three. We'll have phenomenal health care.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you're g-- so you're definitely introducing a plan before the election?

TRUMP: Before the election, yes. We'll be having a plan much before the election. Soon. Fairly soon. It's almost--

STEPHANOPOULOS: How about the--

TRUMP: --complete.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How about the economy? Where do you-- how-- how do you read it right now?

TRUMP: Well, I think the economy is fantastic, George. How does-- (inaudible). You have the best unemployment numbers we've had in 51 years. You have-- industrial numbers-- that are phenomenal. You look at GDP, 3.2 percent in the first quarter. People were shocked to see that. And that's despite the fact that I have various trade deals going on, which you have to do. I mean, I could f-- it would be much easier for me just to let

China and all these countries continue to rip off the United States, but I can't do that. I don't want to do that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Any concern about the softening job numbers over the last couple months--

TRUMP: No, none-- none-- really none. If we pull off the trade deals, which I think I will, we have a lot of power. With respect to trade, we have a lot of power. And-- we have great numbers. The companies are very strong. They've very liquid. Frankly, if we had a different person in the Federal Reserve that wouldn't have raised interest rates so much, we would have been at least a point and a half higher. I mean, three--

STEPHANOPOULOS: He's your pick.

TRUMP: --3.2 percent is good. He's my pick. I agree. But, you know, we also have people in there that weren't my pick. But he's my pick. And-- I disagree with him entirely. As you know, it's independent.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I was going to ask you about that. What do you make of the critics who say it's just inappropriate for you to be talking about the Fed chairman--

TRUMP: Well, I'm allowed to. And, y-- you know, in the old days, they used to speak to the head of the Federal Reserve often. And it was a part-- very much a part of the administration from the standpoint as they'd talk and they'd-- (inaudible) settle. You have no idea how important it is. But I'm not happy with what he's done. I'm not happy with the fact that they've done quantitative tightening. Now, he doesn't make that decision himself. But I would think that the head of the Federal Reserve has quite a bit of power. No, I'm not happy. Now, if-- if we--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you have any concern you're putting him in a box--

TRUMP: Let-- let me explain. Yes, I do. But I'm going to do it anyway because-- I've waited long enough. If he did the interest rate increases half as much, if he didn't do tightening-- tightening means taking money out of the-- out of the till so that people can't use it for doing what they're doing. We call it quantitative tightening. If he didn't do tightening-- if he did nothing or perhaps even loosened, we would be in my opinion, just an opinion, 10,000 points higher than already a very high number. You know, we're-- from the time I got elected, we're about-- we're almost 50 percent up with the stock market. But if he didn't do the tightening and if he didn't do so much of an in-- it's okay to raise interest rates a little bit. But so much, it would have been-- it would have been even better.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you're not worr--

TRUMP: And-- and I'll-- and I'll tell you something. What I don't like is when you raise the interest rates, there's no inflation-- there's virtually no inflation. When you raise interest rates, that means you're paying more in debt. And I inherited almost \$21 trillion in debt. I inherited that. President

Obama and Biden, they doubled the debt during their eight years. You know that. And--

STEPHANOPOULOS: It's been going up on--

TRUMP: --I inherited--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --on your watch, too--

TRUMP: Sure. But I have to rebuild the military. They doubled the debt, and they didn't do anything. They doubled the debt on nonsense. I took over a military that was totally depleted. I have to rebuild it. The good news, we're rebuilding it here. We're building America. Everything's made in the U.S.A., and it's great. But I-- you know, it's one of those things. I have to rebuild the military. Otherwise, I mean, what's more important-- than our military? Especially in these days where you have such problems. And I think the stronger we are, the less likely it is that we use the military. We're close to being very, very strong. We're close to being stronger by far than ever before. But I took over a totally depleted military. And you know that. The planes were old. They talk about the grandchildren of pilots were flying the same plane as they were flying many years ago. We have beautiful new F-35s and F-18s and new-- rifles, new uniforms. In the case of the Army, we have the new uniforms that everybody's wanted for years. They're an expensive-- job. You know, you-- it doesn't sound it, but it is. And-- we have-- we have spent a tremendous amount of money on our military. And we did the right thing because we had to rebuild our military. It was totally-- it was in very bad shape. And you can see that when the military sees me. I fixed the vets. The vets-- the VA was in horrible shape. Now, they have choice. And nobody could get choice. John McCain couldn't get it. Nobody could get it. They tried for years. They couldn't get it. I got choice for the vets so that now instead of waiting in line for many, many weeks in some-- you know, in some cases they would wait for months to see a doctor. They died from waiting in line. Now, our vets have choice where they can go out, get a doctor, and we pay for the doctor. And it's--

STEPHANOPOULOS: In prep--

TRUMP: --a great thing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: In preparation for this trip, we went out and talked to a lot of voters here in Iowa, supporters of yours. And a lot of them say they voted for you, they're proud of you, they're going to vote for you again, most of them. Not all of them.

TRUMP: Yeah. But we'll--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But will vote for you--

TRUMP: --we'll take in new ones, too--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But-- but this is what I want to ask you. Here's the concerns that some of them raise. Number one, we did hear a lot about tariffs. That the back-- that the-- farmers are especially concerned that your

threats of tariffs are-- are going cost them their jobs, are going to cost them their livelihood.

TRUMP: Just wrong. The tariffs are what is allowing us to make great trade deals. If we didn't have tariffs, I couldn't have even spoken to Mexico. You understand that because you saw something that very few people saw. And I wouldn't have even been able to speak to Mexico. If we didn't have tariffs as-- it's a somewhat punitive measure. But if we didn't have tariffs, we wouldn't be able to speak to China. And I'm taking-- out of the billions of dollars that China's paying, I'm taking \$16 billion out to give to farmers because that's what they lost because of China. And I'm making it up. And I'm taking it-- it all comes out of the tariffs that I'm collecting. So the tariffs-

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, Americans are paying those tariffs.

TRUMP: No, they're not. Because China subsidizes their product in order to keep people working. And the companies-- most of the companies, many of the companies are moving out of China to areas that are tariff free, where they're non-tariff. So there is no tariff. And many of them are coming back to America. People don't understand tariffs, but I understand them. And I also understand the power of tariffs. And because of that, the farmer is going to be a big beneficiary in the end. But we gave \$16 billion to the farmers. And all of that money came out of tariffs that we got from China.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Are you going to have to impose the Chinese tariffs?

TRUMP: I don't mind doing it. I mean, it's a tremendous amount of money. We have-- right now, we're getting 25 percent on \$250 billion. And in the end, we're going to get probably 25 percent or so. And it could be even increased. But 25 percent on \$550-\$585 billion. That's hundreds of billions of dollars coming into our country. We never got 10 cents--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if it's Americans--

TRUMP: --from China.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --who are paying it--

TRUMP: No, it's not. George, China is subsidizing their product so that the product stays competitive so that they can keep selling. Not that they want to, but that's the way they're going to sell it. So if you take a look at inflation, inflation's hardly risen. I mean, har-- inflation is very low. That's one of the things I have against the Fed. With a low inflation, they should have kept interest rates where they were or just a small increase instead of raising them so much. He made a mistake. The Fed made a mistake. Despite that, we're doing phenomenally well. Despite everything I said, we're doing phenomenally well.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The other thing--

TRUMP: The tariffs have been very beneficial.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The other thing we're hearing from these-- again, these are voters who support you, still say they're proud of you. They wish you'd cut back on the tweets.

TRUMP: You know, I have it both ways. I have a very unfair press. It's a fake news. It's a corrupt news. I have people that are so dishonest. I mean, I had a case of it recently with the New York Times where they're writing things knowing it was wrong. Knowing. If I don't put it out-- I don't call it tweets. I call it social media. If I don't use social media, I do not get the word out. I have some people that do say that, but I have far more that say-- just today in the-- in the speech I had a woman, "Please don't stop tweeting. Please. That's the only way you're getting the message out." I have so many people that would go-- that would be very unhappy if I ever stopped. And it's not tweet. It's social media. I put it out, and then it goes onto your platform. It goes onto ABC. It goes onto the networks. It goes onto all over cable. It's an incredible--

STEPHANOPOULOS: So for you, it's just--

TRUMP: --way of communicating.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --a tool you're never going to give up?

TRUMP: Well, it's-- it-- how can I communicate like that? I put one out this morning. And as soon as I pressed the button, they said, "We have breaking news." Every network, every station. "We have breaking news." They read my tweet. Why is that bad? And when I'm treated badly by the press-- and nobody's ever been treated badly like me. When I'm treated so badly--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You know that every president says that.

TRUMP: I-- I disagree. Look, it's been acknowledged. Although they do say Abraham Lincoln was treated really badly. I must say that's the one. If you can believe it, Abraham Lincoln was treated supposedly very badly. But nobody's been treated badly like me. And this way I can fight the dishonest media, the corrupt media, the fake news.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And could do-- what they're talking about though is you calling people names. It's demeaning--

TRUMP: Well, you know what? I'll bet they do like it. They may tell you that, but I'll bet they like it, you know? We've gotten great poll numbers recently. Tremendous poll numbers. And a lot of people don't want to talk about it, but they're all Trump voters. They're going to be Trump voters. And that happened in the elections. I mean, one of the things that just happened recently in our election in 2016-- and, by the way, even in the 2018 for Senate, people didn't want to talk about it. They just voted. They voted for Trump people. Now, I campaigned for senators because, you know, you--

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you got hit hard in the House.

TRUMP: Well, I didn't campaign for the House. Remember this also. I wanted to say, "I'm running. I'm running. I'm running." But I wasn't running. There's a big difference when I run and when I just say, "Hey, I

hope you vote for somebody." But look at Senate. We had 51. They thought they were going to take over the Senate, and we took it from 51 to 53. And we have some incredible new senators right now--

STEPHANOPOULOS: I did see--

TRUMP: --in the Senate. And we didn't get credit for that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I did see a positive--

TRUMP: We never got credit for that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --poll number for you today. Quinnipiac Poll showed your approval rating was up 42 (inaudible).

TRUMP: 42 percent?

STEPHANOPOULOS: And-- and before you fight me over the number, let me ask--

TRUMP: No, no. But let me just tell you that Rasmussen just came out today. I'm at 50 percent.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah, that-- that-- Rasmussen has been--

TRUMP: And b-- frankly--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --consistently higher for you. That's-- that's true--

TRUMP: But Rasmussen-- well, I don't know c-- Quinnipiac has never been accurate for me. Rasmussen was the m-- one of the most accurate polls. There were three of them to be exact. One of the three was Rasmussen for the election itself. They called it almost perfectly. Rasmussen today was at 50 percent. And they also say that new people that (inaudible) involved and stay involved in polls, those people are voting for (inaudible).

STEPHANOPOULOS: Here's the thing. Everyone looks at it (inaudible) got to go beyond (inaudible) House races in--

(OVERTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: How do you do it?

TRUMP: We're having the same conversation (inaudible) announced that I was running (inaudible). And guess what?

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: No, I'm just telling you I'm going to do it the same way I did it the first time. A lot of people don't talk. Even the day of the election, they came out with the exit poll. And everyone said, "Oh, Trump's going to be (inaudible)." (inaudible) He's a very talented political (inaudible). He said, "You're going to win big tonight. You're going to get maybe three out of six in the college." He said, "You're winning Florida. You're winning North Carolina. We think you're going to win Pennsylvania. You're winning South

Carolina tremendously. You're winning Ohio. We think we're going win-- Wisconsin and Michigan." And you know what it was? They walk out and they say, "We don't want to talk to you." They say, "Who are you voting for?" "We don't want to talk to you." Almost everyone who said that voted for Trump. They didn't understand it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I know you have to go. What's your pitch to the swing voter on the fence?

TRUMP: Safety, security, great economy. And, you know, for women-- as you know, I did very well with women last time. I was hearing I wouldn't have. I'd say, "Why? Why? Explain." I did very well with women--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you didn't win women.

TRUMP: Well, I got 52 percent. And I will tell you-- in my opinion I might have won women. I-- I think that-- hey, Hillary Clinton focused on women, and I did phenomenally well. Many, many, many points above what they thought. Frankly, I think we're going to do tremendously now with African Americans, with Asians, with Hispanics because they have the lowest unemployment numbers they've ever had in the history of the country.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So that's the pitch?

TRUMP: No, I-- I have no pitch. You know what I have? The economy is phenomenal. We've rebuilt our military. We're taking care of our vets. We're doing the best job that anybody's done probably as a first-term president. I think I've done more than any other first-term president ever. I have a phony witch hunt, which is just a phony pile of stuff. Mueller comes out. There's no collusion. And essentially a ruling that no obstruction. And they (inaudible).

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: They found no collusion. And they didn't find anything having to do with obstruction because they made the ruling based on his comments and (inaudible).

(STEPHANOPOULOS: (inaudible))

TRUMP: Are you trying to say now that there was collusion even though he said there was no collusion?

STEPHANOPOULOS: He didn't say that.

TRUMP: He said no collusion.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He said (inaudible)--

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: George, the report said no collusion.

STEPHANOPOULOS: (inaudible)

TRUMP: Yes, I did.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: You should read it, too, George.

THE WALK TO AND IN THE OVAL OFFICE:

STEPHANOPOULOS: Good morning, Mr. President.

TRUMP: George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How are you? Have a good night?

TRUMP: Very good night. Had a good day and a good night.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How much sleep?

TRUMP: Probably I average four or five hours or something like that. I actually got back last night – you were with us – it was very interesting. I came home and worked a little bit and then--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Are you a big breakfast guy?

TRUMP: Uh I'm not a breakfast guy at all, fortunately. I like the lunches but the dinners is what I really like. And I think you're going to be staying around for this. This is--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah, looking forward to this.

TRUMP: This is going to be something today.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You know, this colonnade. I remember I was with President Obama, in one of his final days in office, he said in some ways this was his favorite part of the White House, where he really made some of his big decisions, what does it mean for you?

TRUMP: It's an incredible part of the White House, it is and you see it all of your life and you know you see president's walking back and forth with others. This is an incredible place. And you have a ramp over there, and the ramp you can see was put in and it actually doesn't qualify under... because it's supposed to be more gradual--

STEPHANOPOULOS: For ADA?

TRUMP: But that was put in for FDR. He didn't want anybody lifting him with the wheelchair. So you have ramps throughout certain areas of the White House. But, uh this one over here was, uh, it's pretty tough to walk down it, actually. I'm always a little bit careful walking down that ramp, it's steep.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you feel the weight of the office when you're walking down this colonnade?

TRUMP: I think about the office walking down. This is a... I – just because you’ve grown up looking at this colonnade, look there are the cameras in another hour from now we have a ceremony on Poland. But you’ll see hundreds of cameras out there and this is what they’re looking at. See you grow up looking at it and you say “wow, I’m now a part of it.” It’s a very special house. The whole White House is a special place.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It’s a long way from coming down that escalator, four years ago.

TRUMP: It is, it’s a long way. It’s been actually a lot fun. Highly competitive, the world is highly competitive, but I think we’re doing a great job. I don’t think anybody has done more in two and a half years than what I’ve done with regulation, with taxes, with... actually believe it or not with world events. We get along with a lot of countries that people don’t understand but they respect us again.

STEPHANOPOULOS: What’s the most fun part of the job?

DONALD TRUMP: I think just the accomplishment of doing a lot of good things for a lot people. We’re-

STEPHANOPOULOS: Hardest part?

TRUMP: We’re handling the vets, you know, we have choice, you’ve seen that and so many others things we’ve been able to do for the vets. The hardest is usually the Congress, I find Congress more difficult than frankly than many of the foreign leaders.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Why is that?

TRUMP: Because they have their own views, you never know exactly but they have their own views and--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But that’s democracy, isn’t it?

TRUMP: Yeah, I guess it is, but... And I... so many things like the border, the border should be done, George. The border... The Democrats should come in and 15 minutes to an hour we can have it all solved. It’s so simple.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But that would mean you’d have to give some stuff as well.

TRUMP: Well, but it’s not even giving stuff. The things that we’re talking about you shouldn’t have to give. It’s so-- there are three and four loopholes you solve those loopholes you no longer have a problem at the border. They should want to do it. But they don’t want to do it because of political reasons.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Is that your big--

TRUMP: That’s why if we can take over the House, we will have things done like never before.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Is that your biggest unfinished piece of business? I remember we spoke on that first day in June of 2015 you were talking about the border, you were talking about the wall, more people crossing the border than ever before right now.

TRUMP: Well, that's because the economy is so good, they try to come into our country. We have many more people wanting to come in and they come for economic reasons, they not coming for asylum... asylum is a way--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Many are facing violence

TRUMP: Really, they're coming though... most of them for economic reasons, and the country is doing better economically than ever before and everybody wants to crack in. I think we've done a great job on the border. We're apprehending more people than ever before under our new Mexico plan. That's going to help a lot because, you know, you're going to see the numbers go way down. But really we should be able to do it much easier than that. If the Democrats sat down for fifteen minutes we could work it out.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Last time we here, I guess you were sitting, what, in this? Was it in that office what with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer on the infrastructure? What happened there?

TRUMP: Ah, very basic, I very calmly said "Listen, I just heard you talking about something that's not the appropriate thing for you to be talking about and then we had a meeting afterwards so let's just take a pass." It was a very simple statement, given very calmly. I then came out and made a press conference...

STEPHANOPOULOS: I remember.

TRUMP: --on something unrelated. Totally unrelated, but, uh, wasn't a big deal. Then they walk out and say "he was stomping and romping and slamming the table..." These people are not honest people.

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're about to walk into the Oval Office, where do you make your biggest decisions? Is it in there? Is it upstairs? Is it in your study?

TRUMP: I really - all over. It's in the plane sometimes going to a country. It's in the strangest places. But uh, the Oval Office.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It just hits you?

TRUMP: Ok, the Oval Office is such a special place. I have the biggest people - yesterday I had some of the biggest business people in the world in my office and they have beautiful offices perhaps more beautiful than the Oval Office, although to me there is nothing more beautiful because of what it represents. But they walk into the Oval Office for the first time and they just - they just want to look around. It's a special place.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Show us around... Famous desk.

TRUMP: So, that's a very famous desk. It's the resolute desk and that was Ronald Reagan, that was--

STEPHANOPOULOS: JFK.

TRUMP: JFK, and there's a very famous picture of John-John right here.

STEPHANOPOULOS: President Clinton used that as well.

TRUMP: President Clinton used it, a number of great presidents used it and frankly I had my choice -- you have your choice of seven desks. They have seven desks and that was the one that immediately -- that was the one that I liked.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How do you -- I mean, do they give you a catalog?

TRUMP: They actually do. They give you pictures of desks. They give you pictures of carpet. This is the Ronald Reagan carpet. They give you pictures of the drapes. You see the drapes? They say - I think we have 12 sets of drapes we can use and I chose those drapes. But, uh... It's really something...

STEPHANOPOULOS: What's the biggest personal touch you've put on the office?

TRUMP: I put a lot of them. The flags. You didn't have flags to any great degree. You had an American flag, but for the most part you didn't have flags. Uh, it's quite a bit different than President Obama. Uh he had some fairly modern paintings, a couple. We didn't want that. We brought it back to Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Hamilton, George Washington, very famous picture of George Washington and I like that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you actually do -- do you actually do work in here? Or is it all for meetings?

TRUMP: I do work in here, I have most of the meetings in here. People like to be in the room. It's very comfortable, and back there I have a tremendous amount of work. In fact, you'd see it's a much different uh, effect. You can't have -- every time we have pictures everyone wants a picture, you don't want to take all things off your desk so I have a desk back here that I actually use much more.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you find you can use the power of this setting to get your way? You're talking to those CEOs coming in here...

TRUMP: I don't think about it. I don't really uh, you know, I don't focus on that, but I think probably it's true. If somebody is sitting here and you're in the Oval Office for the first time which most people aren't, it amazes me, I go into a meeting and we'll have twenty five really big executives. I said how many, and they've been here for a long time, how many seen the Oval Office, nobody raises their hands and I say you've never been in? And the heads of royal companies and car companies and other presidents did not make the Oval Office easily available and I do. I - You know when I have

heads of corporations, and by the way people that are not doing so well also, people that are having problems with life, I bring them in also. So I make it, you know, it's really a very inspiring place.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Tell us about the first time you sat down at that desk as president, I imagine is that where you read the letter from President Obama?

TRUMP: I did. I read the letter there, I don't know if you ever seen the letter. Have you ever seen the letter?

STEPHANOPOULOS: I can't remember actually.

TRUMP: He actually wrote a very beautiful letter, and uh, it's uh, it's very interesting what's happened it's very interesting, but he wrote me a letter which is a custom and he put it right in the drawer, the center drawer and I opened it and I saw the letter I read it and I thought it was very nice and I have it. Uh, right there that's more judges I'm signing, we've signed a 107 judges since I'm in, and I'll get a 145 plus two supreme court judges which we already have and the numbers should be quite a bit higher than that. Ultimately, the judges will go, I inherited almost 145 judges, which is shocking. But they couldn't get them through or something happened at the last two or three years of the Obama administration where he was not getting judges. I'm not talking about Supreme Court judges, which happened also with Merrick Garland. I'm talking about regular judges and court of appeal judges, federal judges, but I had 145, that's a shocking number.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You think that--

TRUMP: So, that's going to be a big percentage of the judiciary. And there are those that say, because of that this will be a big part of the...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well that's what I was going to ask you, you also have two Supreme Court justices do you think that could be your most lasting impact?

TRUMP: Well it could, I mean people have said that. I don't think of it that way. Because we've given the biggest tax cut in history, we have ANWR, we have, uh, the biggest regulation cut by far.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The tax cut come and go, judges make decisions for generations...

TRUMP: They do and they do and regulation cuts come and go, but the reason the economy is so good and the reason that so many people are pouring up through Mexico and wanting to come into our country, including people from Mexico is because economy is so powerful. It's so good. So, that's all important, but there are those that say the thing I've done best is judges, and we'll see.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Before you got here, you--

TRUMP: Considerably a big -- it's certainly a big number.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --already sent out three tweets this morning. I'm usually at my desk between 6:30 and 7 when they start to come in, and it seems like you're very conscious of kind of - you're going to set the news for the day before all of us do.

TRUMP: No, I don't think of it that way. It obviously didn't work because I watched your show this morning. I watched Good Morning America and they had something about the polling, and it's really suppression polling. It's fake polling, but in that case it was just made up polling, and I had--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Made up?

TRUMP: I had the same thing and-- made up, I mean, they give you phony numbers, they give you numbers, they said that they have access to numbers, which I don't believe they have access to. But-but I went through it in 2016, I was going to be tied in Texas, it was going to be very close, I won by a lot. I was going to be tied Utah, I won by a lot now I was going to lose Pennsylvania, I won it. I was going to lose North Carolina, I won it. I mean it was all phony polling. It's actually phony polling and I believe it's suppression. They suppress, they want to suppress the minds of people so they don't bother going out and voting.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you think there's a real conspiracy?

TRUMP: No, I just think it's just a bad group of people, and it shouldn't be allowed, but that's no different than the fake news and the fake news is at a level that it's never been at before.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You and I, we know we disagree about that, but we have a whole day ahead to go on this. Before we go, one of the things you have as president is access to all the information all the mysteries out there I was just struck in the last couple weeks, we're reading more and more reports of navy pilots seeing lots and lots of UFOs. Have you been briefed on that?

TRUMP: Yeah, I have-- I have.

STEPHANOPOULOS: What do you make of it?

TRUMP: I think it's probably, uh, I want them to think whatever they think, they do say, I mean, I've seen and I've read and I've heard, and I did have one very brief meeting on it. But people are saying they're seeing UFO's, do I believe it? Not particularly.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you think you'd know if there were evidence of extraterrestrials?

TRUMP: Well, I think my great pilots-- our great pilots would know. And some of them really see things that are a little bit different than in the past, so we're going to see, but we'll watch it. You'll be the first to know.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. President, thank you. Have a good day.

TRUMP: Thank you, George. ... Different things. Judges get things like this too, these are also other positions.... United States--

STEPHANOPOULOS: I still have mine framed somewhere

TRUMP: These are ambassadors. That's really something, isn't it? Secretary of the Interior. This is, uh, let's see, United States district judge of the Eastern District of Missouri. Great state, Missouri.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You won that pretty well.

TRUMP: I won it well. I won it well. This is...United States District Judge, Western District of North Carolina, great state. But you see, all the judges and many of these President Obama just, something happened, he didn't...

STEPHANOPOULOS: He ran into Mitch McConnell, didn't he?

TRUMP: I don't know, I mean, perhaps. But I ended up with 145 judges, nobody has ever had anything like that happen.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The difference a Senate can make.

TRUMP: It's a tremendous difference. United States District Court; Utah. Another great one, right? Utah.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You know, this just made me think of something. Several of even your Republican senators when you came in where kind of skeptical of you. And now it seems like they are 100 percent in line, what happened?

TRUMP: I have a great relationship-- hey, they found out I am very smart and I know what I'm doing. You know, they didn't know I was never a politician before. I had, what, 15 debates and we won every debate. According to every poll, I mean I can only tell you by the polls. But every poll, they had many polls, doing many debates, I never lost one poll I think they've gained a certain respect.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And respect for your base.

TRUMP: And they respect my base. I respect my base. I think I have the greatest base in the history of politics because they are not believers in false things. Now, I have to explain it and that's one of the great things about social media. If you do a bad story, I can explain it away. For instance, on Good Morning America today they had that phony polling information. I explained to you last night that it was phony, but you didn't do anything about it. You should have, but it was late in the evening and perhaps you didn't get a chance.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I didn't see the piece this morning. I've listened to, I've studied those polls, I've heard the explanations--

TRUMP: Ultimately, it doesn't matter.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But, why does it bother you so much?

TRUMP: Because, it's untrue. I like the truth. I'm actually a very honest guy. If I thought they were correct, I wouldn't be complaining at all. I understand that. It's like the witch hunt that goes on. No collusion with Russia, there was no collusion. And what bothers me--

STEPHANOPOULOS: As you know, that's not what--

TRUMP: You know, can I, it's what it says--

STEPHANOPOULOS: That's not what Robert Mueller found.

TRUMP: That's what it says. It said no collusion. You know what, nobody even brings Russia up anymore. They talk about phase two but it's a total phony deal. If it weren't, if I colluded with Russia, it wouldn't bother me nearly as much. What bothers me, is when you did nothing wrong and they have a phony witch hunt. That bothers me. And Mueller, who hates Trump, he is a never Trumper and then he puts--

STEPHANOPOULOS: What evidence do you have that he hates you?

TRUMP: George, I know he hates me. And then he puts 18 people on who are Democrats.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not all Democrats.

TRUMP: Well, they are very close. And they were contributors to Hillary and some of them even worked for Hillary Clinton.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Robert Mueller is a Republican.

TRUMP: And Weissmann was a bad guy. And they put all these people on. So I am being judged by 18 people that truly dislike Donald Trump. I mean in many cases hate. Weissmann was at Hillary Clinton's, it was supposed to be a party, it turned out to be a wake. It turned out to be a funeral. But, Weissmann was there.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You called Robert Mueller honorable, why the switch?

TRUMP: I'm not switching or anything. I would hope he is honorable. But you know what, he gave us no collusion and that was a very big thing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He did not say that.

TRUMP: And frankly, frankly, he did say that. He said there was no collusion. George, read the report.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He said he explicitly didn't look at collusion-- I did. He said there was insufficient evidence that said there was a conspiracy. I read every page.

TRUMP: Excuse me, read the report, read the conclusion of the report, just read it. Ok, I mean look you are one that said Donald Trump is not going to win and then you smiled when I got into the race, and you laughed. You and Maggie Haberman would laugh 'haha' that was so funny and I will give

your deputy chairman of the DNC credit. Because he looked at the two of you and said, sorry to tell you but Donald Trump is going to win.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you are President of the United States today.

TRUMP: And you laughed because you thought it was ridiculous and Maggie Haberman of the New York Times who knows nothing about me, by the way, I rarely speak to her, she laughed and thought it was so funny. The people that didn't think it was funny were the people that voted for me.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you are here right now. You are President of The United States.

TRUMP: I am, I am, that's true.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yet it seems like you just feel this need to push back at perceived enemies.

TRUMP: No. At false stories, at fake news. Because nobody has any idea how corrupt the media is. They are corrupt. Not all of it, fortunately. But the media is corrupt.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You word it all by continuing to say that the media is corrupt, that this is all fake news but when you need the media at a time of national crisis we're not going to have the kind of unity we need.

TRUMP: I'm not worried about it, no. I'm not worried about it. We are doing very well and we are going to be just fine. I am just saying, I know stories, so I know what I did, what I didn't do. When I have someone writing a story that is so opposite the facts, and a lot of the people out there now they believe me - the media has gone way, way down in terms of approval numbers. I think they are lower than Congress right now. And you know what, when they started, I think they were in the 90s, now they are in the teens.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I'm not sure the media has ever been in the 90s, but to keep talking about the truth and we are trying to stay on the facts as well and you know you have been cited many times for not telling the full truth with Robert Mueller, he didn't look at collusion, he found 126 contacts between your campaign and Russia, said it was not a conspiracy, that is true.

TRUMP: Excuse me, what about Hillary Clinton? Hillary Clinton conspired with Russia. She had somebody that came out of Russia. They got information from Russia. Excuse me. Hillary Clinton was totally involved with it. That's the one - if you talk about collusion with Russia take a look at Christopher Steele, all his contacts with Russia which by the way she paid for, and turned out to be a phony deal, which everyone is now admitting that. No George, all I want is the truth. All I want is fairness.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you say that for example you were pursuing a Trump Tower in Moscow during the campaign and denying any relationship with Russia.

TRUMP: George, let me tell you: I didn't even do a deal in Moscow, do you know we, I don't even think they had--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You were pursuing it.

TRUMP: Excuse me, excuse me. Pursuing, what does pursuing mean? You know because someone walks in, says, "Hey we're looking at..." Do you know that I don't even think they had a site? I don't even think they knew who was going to do the deal. It was a concept of a deal, more of a concept than anything else. It was a concept of a deal someplace in Russia, probably in Moscow, and I was looking at places all over the world--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But didn't voters have a right to know that?

TRUMP: I wouldn't mind telling them. There's nothing wrong with it--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if you--

TRUMP: In fact I was, I didn't consider that pursuing a deal when you don't even have a site. Do you know how many people, how many things I look at? You didn't even have a site in Moscow, they didn't know what they were doing in Moscow, there was virtually no work done on it by me certainly, by me. By the way, by my son, by Don. And, I'm looking at things all over the world. When you will see my financial statement, at some point I assume it's going to be released, you'll be very impressed by the job I've done. Much, much bigger, much, much better than anybody--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Which financial statement?

TRUMP: Uhh, they're after my financial statement. Now, they should be after everyone else's financial statement but, uhh, they are after, the Senate, they'd like to get my financial statement. At some point, I hope they get it--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You going to turn it over?

TRUMP: No, at some point, I might, but at some point I hope they get it because it's a financ--, it's a fantastic financial statement. It's a fantastic financial statement. And let's do that over, he's coughing in the middle of my answer.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah. Okay.

TRUMP: I don't like that, you know, I don't like that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Your chief of staff.

TRUMP: If you're going to cough, please leave the room. You just can't, you just can't cough. Boy oh boy. Okay, do you want to do that a little differently than uhh--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yep, thank you.

TRUMP: So at some point--so at some point, I look forward to, frankly, I'd like to have people see my financial statement because it's phenomenal--

STEPHANOPOULOS: It's up to you--

TRUMP: No, it's not up to me. It's up to lawyers, it's up to everything else. But they're asking for things that they should never be asking for, that they've never asked another president for. They want to go through every deal that they've ever done, they've--what they're doing is a disgrace.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You know other presidents have turned over their tax returns.

TRUMP: They're trying to do: step, step, step. They want to keep it going as long as possible to try to demean and hurt as much as possible so they can possibly win the presidential election. They're not going to win the presidential election. Nobody's done, in two and a half years, the job I've done as president. The economy is one of the best in the history of our country. Taxes are lower than they've been, almost ever, almost ever, certainly in the last fifty years. We've done a job with the vets. We've done a job with just about everything, even Obamacare, it was almost terminated, except for one vote by John McCain, but it was almost terminated. If it would've been terminated, we would have great--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Most of (inaudible) wanted (inaudible) to be terminated--

TRUMP: No, people hate Obamacare. It's too expensive, it's not good, but if we win the House, we win the Senate, we win the presidency. You're going have the greatest healthcare that anybody's ever had.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you said, yesterday you told me, you're going have a plan, in what, the next couple of weeks?

TRUMP: I'm going have a plan over the next month--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Month--

TRUMP: --for healthcare. And it's going be a great plan. Now, that's all subject because the Democrats won't vote for it. It's not their kind of a thing, because it's too good, but we're going have a great healthcare plan, but we have to win the House, we have to win the Senate, we have to win the presidency.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. President, thank you.

TRUMP: Thank you very much. Do you agree with the cough? I hate to have a cough in the middle of a (inaudible). ... No, but don't you agree with that? Some (inaudible)...look, here's another judge. Here's a, uh, an intelligence advisor board. It's pretty amazing. (inaudible) three or four judges pretty much every other day.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Pretty satisfying part of the job?

TRUMP: I love it. And these are great people. Uh, we're going --we're very careful in judges. We're, umm, getting phenomenal--in fact, we have very good marks on the judges we've appointed. And they're not judges you might like, but they're judges that a lot of folks that like me, they like them a lot--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You're a fighter. You, you, it feels like you're in a constant kind of churn--

TRUMP: Yeah, uh, my life has always been a fight. And I enjoy that I guess, I don't know if I enjoy it or not, I gue--sometimes I have false fights like the Russian witch hunt. That's a false fight. That's a made-up, uh, hoax. And I had to fight that--

STEPHANOPOULOS: The first line of his report says they had a systematic attempt at interfere in (inaudible) relations.

TRUMP: They did, but not me. And they also said, okay, that we rebuffed them. Okay?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well they said you're (inaudible).

TRUMP: That the Trump campaign. Excuse me. The campaign, the Trump campaign rebuffed them. We had nothing to do with Russia. Hillary Clinton had much more to do with Russia than anything having to do without campaign. It said very specifically that not only that we didn't have to do, but we rebuffed them. Now anything having to do with Russia had nothing to do with our campaign.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, Paul Manafort--

TRUMP: Paul Manafort, they have Paul Manafort on taxes and many other things. Nothing to do with our campaign.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Giving polling information to the Russians--

TRUMP: I don't know anything about that. What difference does polling information make? It doesn't matter. He was maybe trying to do something for an account or something. Who knows? But they said specifically that there was nothing to do, and we in fact rebuffed them--

STEPHANOPOULOS: They said there were hundreds (inaudible)--

TRUMP: It's a phony--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --what they said is that--

TRUMP: They also said that there were bloggers in Moscow and they said specifically about the bloggers in Moscow, had nothing to do with Trump, had nothing to do with the--and there were like 32 or 36 bloggers. We have nothing to do with bloggers in Mo--in Moscow. I'll tell you, you talk about collusion, take a look at the collusion with the Democrat party and Facebook and Google and Twitter. That's called collusion, that's called real collusion. Not where somebody buys some ads and the other thing, having

to do with Russia. They were also helping the Clinton campaign, you know that. It wasn't just Trump. And Putin, I will say this: if he had it, it was up to him. He would much rather have Hillary Clinton be president right now. And all of these countries would rather have Biden or anybody else but Trump.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He said he was trying to help elect you. He said that explicitly.

TRUMP: Well he might've said that after I won, because it's a smart thing to say. Okay?

STEPHANOPOULOS: And Mueller says that he's trying to do that--

TRUMP: Mueller said that we rebuffed Russia, that we pushed them away, that we weren't interested. Read the report.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I have read the report. On that though your son Don Jr. is up before the Senate Intelligence Committee today, and again, he was not charged with anything. In retrospect though--

TRUMP: I mean not only wasn't he charged, if you read it, with all of the horrible fake news, I mean, I was reading that my son was going to go to jail. This is a good young man. That he was going to go to jail and all of these horrible stories. And then the report comes out and they didn't even say, they-they--hardly talked about him.

STEPHANOPOULOS: (inaudible) going to the FBI when he got that email.

TRUMP: Okay, let's put yourself in a position: you're a congressman, somebody comes up and says, "Hey I have information on your opponent." Do you call the FBI?

STEPHANOPOULOS: (inaudible) if it's coming from Russia you do.

TRUMP: I'll tell you what: I've seen a lot of things over my life. I don't think in my whole life I've ever called the FBI. In my whole life. You don't call the FBI. You throw somebody out of your office, you do whatever you--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Al Gore got a stolen briefing book. He called the FBI.

TRUMP: Well, that's different. A stolen briefing book. This isn't a (inaudible). This is somebody who said "We have information on your opponent." Oh, let me call the FBI. Give me a break, life doesn't work that way.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The FBI Director says that's what should happen.

TRUMP: The FBI Director is wrong. Because, frankly, it doesn't happen like that in life. Now, maybe it will start happening. Maybe today you think differently, but two or three years ago, if somebody comes into your office with oppo research--they call it oppo research--with information that might be good or bad or something, but good for you, bad for your opponent, you don't call the FBI. I would guarantee you that 90 percent, could be 100

percent of the congressmen or the senators over there, have had meetings, if they didn't they probably wouldn't be elected, on negative information about their opponent--

STEPHANOPOULOS: From foreign countries?

TRUMP: They don't pro--possibly. Possibly. But they don't call the FBI. You don't call the FBI every time some--you hear something that maybe--. Now, you see the people. The meeting, it also sounds to me, I don't know anything about that meeting, but it sounds to me like it was a big nothing. That meeting was a big nothing. But I heard about my son, who is a great young man, going to jail over a meeting where somebody said I have information on Hillary Clinton. She's the one who should be in jail. She deleted 33--

STEPHANOPOULOS: She should be in jail?

TRUMP: She deleted 33,000 emails from, sent by the United States Congress. They gave a subpoena to Hillary Clinton for 33,000 emails. After the subpoena was gotten, she deleted them. That's called obstruction. And her lawyer should also be looked at because her lawyer, she's got to have the greatest lawyer on earth because she does that, he did the deleting supposedly, not only did they delete, but they acid washed them.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That, that's been investigated.

TRUMP: Now that's called the--no, no. No, no. It's being investigated I assume now.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It's been investigated.

TRUMP: I don't know, I stay uninvolved. I stay totally uninvolved--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You haven't asked (inaudible) to take a look into--

TRUMP: --and I don't talk to, I don't talk to. We have a great attorney general now. I don't talk to my attorney general about that, but I'll tell you what: when you send 33...They requested 33,000 emails. She got the request. They deleted every one of them. Okay? If you did that, you would've been put in jail--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Your campaign this time around, if foreigners, if Russia, if China, if someone else offers you information on opponents, should they accept it or should they call the FBI?

TRUMP: I think maybe you do both. I think you might want to listen, I don't, there's nothing wrong with listening. If somebody called from a country, Norway, "We have information on your opponent." Oh, I think I'd want to hear it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You want that kind of interference in our elections?

TRUMP: It's not an interference, they have information. I think I'd take it. If I thought there was something wrong, I'd go maybe to the FBI. If I thought

there was something wrong. But when somebody comes up with oppo research, right, that they come up with oppo research. Oh, let's call the FBI. The FBI doesn't have enough agents to take care of it, but you go and talk honestly to congressmen, they all do it, they always have. And that's the way it is. It's called oppo research.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Surprising. Thank you.

TRUMP: Thank you. Okay. Fine.

ONE-ON-ONE SIT-DOWN IN THE ROSE GARDEN:

STEPHANOPOULOS: So I was listening to you introduce the first lady in there. And it made me think of this: How is Barron doing?

TRUMP: Barron's doing fantastically. He's here. He likes soccer. He's doing a great job.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He likes the White House?

TRUMP: He likes the White House. Likes it.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: --it, it's not too tough.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not too shabby. We-- we've spoken on a lot of the big moments over the last few years--

TRUMP: George, are we on now?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah, we're on.

TRUMP: Oh, okay.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Yeah. One year ago today, we were in Singapore right after your meeting with Kim Jong Un. And you told me that you trust him. And you also put out that tweet. "There's no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea." But they-- there is a nuclear threat today, isn't there--

TRUMP: Well, it could change. I would say not much. There's been no testing, no anything. But it could--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But they have stockpiles.

TRUMP: --change, George. It could change. And when it changes, I'll let you know. But right now-- I will actually show you the letter. But-- I'd show it to you a little bit off the record. But it was-- a very nice letter. But I've received many very nice letters. And he's a very tough guy. He's a very smart person. He doesn't treat a lot of people very well, but he's been treating me well. Now, at some point that may change. And then I'll have to change, too. But right now, we have a very good, you know, relationship. We have a really very strong relationship--

STEPHANOPOULOS: So you still trust him?

TRUMP: Well, look, I-- I don't-- I-- first of all, if I didn't, I couldn't tell you that. It would be very insulting to him. But the answer is, yeah, I believe that he would like to do something. I believe he respects me. It doesn't mean it's going to get done. This has been going on for many, many decades with the family. But I get along with him really well, I think I understand him, and I think he understands me. And there's never been a relationship with him or his family. And that was at his choice and their choice. They never wanted to have a relationship with us.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But there have been these cycles, as you know, with the family, with North Korea-- with President Clinton, with President George W. Bush.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: And everybody gave him a lot. President Clinton gave him billions and billions of dollars and got nothing. I've given nothing. Now--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But do you worry that he--

TRUMP: --at some point--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --could be playing you, too?

TRUMP: Well, look, I put on sanctions. The sanctions are on. We've gotten our hostages back. We've gotten-- the remains. And they continue to come back, the remains of our-- our great heroes from the past--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Did they try to make you pay for Otto Warmbier?

TRUMP: He-- w-- when you say "me," not me--

STEPHANOPOULOS: The United States.

TRUMP: Because I didn't know him at that time. That was a very different deal. But here's the bottom line. I ended it. We didn't pay. We never paid. What he did with other people in the State Department, that's irrelevant. And it might not be him. It might be his people. But we never paid for Otto. And I have great respect for Otto's parents. And what happened to Otto is horrible, horrible. But we never paid for Otto. And I will tell you I ended it. But that was before I knew him. I didn't know him at all. That was a long time ago now it seems. But a lot of things have happened. And there's been no nuclear testing. There's been essentially no testing whatsoever except for very short range. And that's something that a lot of nations test frankly, what he tested. I think we've made tremendous progress. Now, I will let you know if it goes the other way. And it can, and it can happen instantly. But we've done a very good job. George, prior to my getting here, nuclear testing all over the place. Moving mountains. I mean, moving-- this was serious nuclear stuff. There's nothing like that. You don't even hear about anything.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you think he's still building nuclear weapons?

TRUMP: I don't know. I hope not. He promised me he wouldn't be. He promised we-- me he wouldn't be testing. I think he'd like to meet again.

And I think he likes me a lot. And I think-- you know, I think that we have a chance to do something.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: I'll tell you what he likes. He's a very smart person. And that country has-- almost of any undeveloped country anywhere in the world, that country has the chance to be economically a behemoth. And he can--

STEPHANOPOULOS: If he released-- if he stopped--

TRUMP: --lead it. And he can lead it--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --imprisoning his own people and starving his own people.

TRUMP: I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about from an economic standpoint. He's between China, Russia, and speak. It's all in the oceans. It's phenomenal. It's-- it's a phenomenal location. That country can be so rich. And he knows that. And I think he really wants to do that. And the only way he's going to do it is it's going to do it-- has to do it in a non-nuclear way.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It appears--

TRUMP: And that's what we care about.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It appears that meeting with you is dangerous for members of his negotiating team.

TRUMP: Somebody said, "Well, I guess he's a tougher negotiator maybe than we thought." The fact is that I don't know what happened with the five people. One person I think (SIREN) that we spotted. You know, the-- the lead. And he certainly seemed to be healthy. I have no idea whether or not anything happened to anybody else. You know, you hear all sorts of stories, but I don't know that--

STEPHANOPOULOS: What--

TRUMP: --they're true. And you would never know and probably wouldn't be able to find out very easily.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not easy. It's a closed society. One final question on that. You had that question yesterday about-- Kim Jong Un's half-brother and who may have been a CIA asset before your time. You said it wouldn't happen on your auspices. Explain what you meant by that.

TRUMP: Well, they say he worked for the CIA. And I think frankly that we're beyond that point in terms of a relationship. And I don't think it would have to happen. I think that Kim Jong Un-- and you've heard many bad things about him, but you've heard from me different things. I think that Kim Jong Un wants to see a very-- has a chance to do something that would be unique. He could have almost an instantaneously wealthy behemoth. It could be an incredibly wealthy, successful--

STEPHANOPOULOS: So we don't have to spy on--

TRUMP: --country.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --North Korea anymore?

TRUMP: Well, I-- I'm not going to say we're going to or we're not going to. But it didn't happen during my-- with respect to his brother, it didn't happen during my auspices, during the time that I'm here.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Lift a veil on your strategy here. You know, I listen to you every single day. All Americans do. Especially over these last couple days. You know, you-- "The-- the-- the press are enemy of the people. Fake news. Joe Biden's a loser, low IQ." Yet all these warm words--

TRUMP: And other people are very good. No, I--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --for Kim Jong-- no, but explain the strategy--

TRUMP: I say nice things about you.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Why-- why--

TRUMP: Maybe you're in that category.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You never know. But I-- but w-- th-- there seems to be a dissonance there.

TRUMP: I don't think so. I say a lot of nice things about a lot of people that are very soft and nice. And I say good things about lots of people. Look, I'm running-- I'm in charge of a very, very special gift. It's this incredible country. I'm dealing with people. Some might be nice, and some might not be nice. But I've done a great job. You know, when I got elected, everyone thought we were going to be at war the following day. Hasn't turned out to be. And our country is now more respected than it's been in many, many decades. We're more respected now than we were in many decades. I've been rebuilding the military. Our military was totally depleted between President Bush with the Middle East and, you know, just-- it was a terrible decision to go into the Middle East. Terrible, terrible. I-- I happen to think it was the worst decision made in the history of our country, going into the Middle-- it's like quicksand. And, by the way, Iraq did not knock down the World Trade Center. It was not Iraq. It were other people. And I think I know who the other people were. And you might also. But-- it was a terrible decision--

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: It was a terrible decision to go into the Middle East. Terrible. We're now up to almost \$8 trillion. And when we want to build a roadway, a highway, a school, or something, everyone's always fighting over money. It's ridiculous. So that was a bad decision. President Obama didn't spend money on military. It wasn't his thing. He didn't want to spend. So I inherited a very depleted military. You can't have a depleted military today.

And we have now a military that's very close to being at a level that we haven't had it in many, many decades.

STEPHANOPOULOS: We talked about Russia before, but we haven't talked about Robert Mueller's evidence on obstruction of justice. The attorney general said you didn't commit obstruction of justice. Robert Mueller said he's not reaching a decision-- could not exonerate you. And he laid out all that evidence. More than a thousand former federal prosecutors--

TRUMP: Oh, that's-- but they're all--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --have looked at--

TRUMP: --politicians. Hey George. Look, I know more about prosecutors than you'll ever know. They're politicians. I could get you 5,000 that would also say that there's nothing. You know, I-- I saw their names. And these are all-- many of them are Trump haters. Many of them if you look at the names.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Many Republicans, too--

TRUMP: I could get you thousands. You know how many prosecutors there have been over the-- if you add them all up? We could get you thousands of prosecutors. I've been treated so unfairly because I never did anything. There was no crime. The crime was committed by the Democrats. It was committed by your friend Hillary Clinton. The crime was committed by them. The crime was committed by Comey and all of these people. Now, we're going to find out. Because I guess there's an investigation. I stay away from it, but I guess there's an investigation going on. George, I could get you thousands of prosecutors that say this is the most unfair-- you take a man like Alan Dershowitz, who's a very brilliant guy. He thinks this is one of the worst things ever to happen to our country because I've been unfairly treated. Even a question like that's unfair.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The-- the question--

TRUMP: But they're taking-- they're taking people and you're taking people, and you're-- I could get you thousands of prosecutors--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. President, there's nothing unfair about the question.

TRUMP: --to say whatever I want them to say--

STEPHANOPOULOS: One of the-- one of those prosecutors today, Kamala Harris, running for president--

TRUMP: Oh, give me a break. She's running for president. She's doing horribly. She's way down in the polls.

STEPHANOPOULOS: She said she would have no choice--

TRUMP: And I must say Pocahontas is--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --but to prosecute you.

TRUMP: --really-- cleaning her clock. And I heard she made that statement. And you know what? Who wouldn't? Probably if I were running in her position, I'd make the same statement. There was no crime. There was no Russia collusion. There was no Russia, I'll put it in your language, conspiracy, which is even better than collusion. You know, the word "collusion" is a softer word than "conspiracy." If you look at what Robert Mueller wrote-- who's no lover of Donald Trump I will tell you. Frankly, he was conflicted. He shouldn't even be allowed to do it. No special counsel should have ever been appointed. You know why? Because there was no crime.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But he lay--

TRUMP: They had no-- excuse me. They had no evidence of crime.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He lays out a lot of evidence, including the episode where you ask your White House counsel, Don McGahn-- you tell him, "Mueller has to go." You call him twice--

TRUMP: Yeah, it--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --and say, "Mueller has to go. Call me when it's done."

TRUMP: And there-- now, the story on that very simply, number one, I was never going to fire Mueller. I never suggested firing Mueller. Do I think--

STEPHANOPOULOS: That's not what he said.

TRUMP: Excuse-- I don't care what he says. It doesn't matter. That was to show everyone what a good counsel he was. Now, he may have gotten confused with the fact that I've always said, and I've said it to you, and I've said to anybody that would listen Robert Mueller was conflicted. He was conflicted because we had a business transaction where I wouldn't give him back a deposit--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But Mueller writes about that--

TRUMP: --that he wanted. Excuse me.

STEPHANOPOULOS: He writes about that. Steve Bannon told you it was ridiculous.

TRUMP: It's--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Don McGahn--

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: Steve Bannon is trivial. Doesn't even know about it or hardly would kb at it. But he had a total conflict. He also happened to have a very good friendship and relationship with Comey. So if Mueller has a

relationship with Comey and a very close relationship, right then and there he's conflicted.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But why would Don McGahn lie--

TRUMP: But we had a business-- wait a minute--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Why would he lie under oath? Why would he lie--

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: Because he wanted to make--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --Robert Mueller?

TRUMP: --himself look like a good lawyer. Or-- or he believed it because I would constantly tell anybody that would listen, including you, including the media, that Robert Mueller was conflicted. Robert Mueller had a total conflict of interest--

STEPHANOPOULOS: And has to go?

TRUMP: I never s-- I didn't say that. If I-- look, Article II. I would be allowed to fire Robert Mueller. There was n-- assuming-- assuming I did all of the things, I said I want to fire him, number one, I didn't. He wasn't fired. Okay? Number one, very importantly. But more importantly, Article II allows me to do whatever I want. Article II would have allowed me to fire him.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So it sounds like you--

TRUMP: But I wasn't going to fire. You know why? Because I watched Richard Nixon go around firing everybody, and that didn't work out too well. So very simply, Article II would allow me to do it. But Don McGahn thought he did a great favor. And maybe he even believes it. But that never happened. And I have people that will tell you it didn't happen.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: Because I didn't want to fire Mueller, but I thought Mueller frankly should not have been appointed--

STEPHANOPOULOS: He has documentation.

TRUMP: Let-- let me just tell you something. Robert Mueller had a conflict. I would say it to anybody that would listen. He was totally conflicted. He had numerous conflicts. One of them was the fact that he applied for the job to be the FBI-- the head of the FBI. And, by the way--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Steve Bannon said he didn't. That's in the report--

TRUMP: Steve Bannon wouldn't know. Steve Bannon has no idea. Steve Bannon was not in the room. He was in line. I can get you two people that work in the White House office, in the Oval Office to tell you he was standing in line along with other people applying for the job. I was

interviewing people. That's when we made a deal with Chris Wray. Robert Mueller wanted the job. He wanted to go back as the FBI director. That's perfectly fine. But I told him no. And then the next day he's appointed special prosecutor or shortly thereafter. I think it was actually the next day. He's appointed special counsel? That's a conflict--

STEPHANOPOULOS: The report says he didn't--

TRUMP: George, that's a conflict. It was in the papers--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But the-- the report says he didn't--

TRUMP: It was in--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --apply. But let-- let's-- I want to talk--

TRUMP: It was in-- George, it was in the newspapers. He came into my office. He wanted to be FBI director again. And I said no.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The report--

TRUMP: That's a conflict.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The report says that's not true. But let's talk about this Article II thing.

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: Excuse me. Don't-- don't just, you know, shove it out like that. He applied for a job. I said no. And the next day, he's my-- he's my person that's going to be taking a look at me? Also, business conflict. Also, we had a conflict with-- with Comey. He had a-- his friend is Comey. So don't tell me about this, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You talk about Article II. So your position is that you can hire or fire anybody, stop or start--

(OVERTALK)

TRUMP: That is the position of a lot of great lawyers. That's the position of some of the most talented lawyers. And you have to have a position like that because you're the president. But without even bringing up Article II, which absolutely gives you every right--

STEPHANOPOULOS: So a president can't obstruct justice?

TRUMP: A president can run the country. And that's what happened, George. I run the country, and I run it well.

STEPHANOPOULOS: When the president does it, it's not illegal?

TRUMP: I'm just saying a president under Article II-- it's very strong. Read it. Do you have Article II? Read it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I know what Article II says--

TRUMP: Read it. No, read it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I don't have it--

TRUMP: Go ahead.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --in front of me. I--

TRUMP: Read it for your audience.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It-- it-- it talks about executive power. But your position--

TRUMP: Okay, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --under--

TRUMP: You know what? Let's get onto another subject that's a very simple subject, Article II. But besides that, Mueller had conflicts.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if you answer these questions to me now, why not answer them to Robert Mueller under oath?

TRUMP: Because they were looking to get us for lies or slight misstatements. I looked at what happened to people, and it was very unfair. Very, very unfair. Very unfair.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So you-- it was the right thing not to answer the questions?

TRUMP: Go ahead. Have a drink.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Happy to. So I'm listening to you. You're not worried about being prosecuted once you leave office?

TRUMP: Did nothing wrong, George. Did nothing wrong. There was no collusion. (SIREN) You don't even hear Russia mentioned anymore. Are you guys okay? ... There was no collusion. You don't even hear Russia mentioned anymore. Russ- Russia's not mentioned. Now, it's all about obstruct-- obstruction of what? They built up a phony crime. They hired a man that hated Trump. He hired 18 people that were Democrats that hated Trump. Some of them contributed to Clinton's campaign. A couple of them worked for Clinton. I mean, what kind of a rigged deal is this? (THROAT CLEARING) And then on top of it, after two years and after being the most transparent in history, I gave them 1.5 million pages of documents, right? I gave them four or five hundred witnesses. I let Don McGahn testify. I let him say-- he was the White House counsel. I let him testi--

STEPHANOPOULOS: But you knew he was--

(OVERTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: --an interview. You didn't answer questions on obstruction.

TRUMP: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I did answer questions. I answered them in writing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not on obstruction--

TRUMP: I don't know about this-- I don't know. I answered a lot of questions. They gave me questions. I answered them in writing.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Not on obstruction.

TRUMP: Look. George, you're being a little wise guy, okay-- which is, you know, typical for you. Just so you understand. Very simple. It's very simple. There was no crime. There was no collusion. The big thing's collusion. Now, there's no collusion. That means they set-- it was a setup. In my opinion, and I think it's going to come out.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Who set it up--

TRUMP: I hope it's going to come out. We're going to find out very soon. Because I really believe it's going to come out. When you look at Strzok, these FBI guys that were lowlives, when you look-- because the FBI's the greatest. But these-- the top people were absolutely lowlives. When you look at Strzok and Page and they're talking about an insurance policy just in case she loses, that was the insurance policy--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You know, I've heard you talk about that--

TRUMP: I went--

STEPHANOPOULOS: --before.

TRUMP: George, I went through the insurance policy.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I understand that. But if they were determined to prevent you from becoming president, why wouldn't they leak it beforehand?

TRUMP: You know what--

STEPHANOPOULOS: It didn't come out before the election--

TRUMP: You'd have to ask them. Oh, they tried. They tried. You know, it's an amazing thing. Probably one of the few times I respected the press is that the f-- the dossier, that fake news dossier, that fake pile of garbage that Comey knew about and all of these people-- and they paid a fortune for-- and Hillary Clinton paid for it. And the Democrats, okay? And they got information from Russia that turned out to be false. But that fake dossier, if you like that, they used that all over the place. And the one time I respected the press because they did the right thing, they wouldn't print it. They couldn't get it printed. They tried it to be before the election. If that would have happened before the election, I could have lost.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But it didn't.

TRUMP: No, no. Because the newspapers would not print it. I cannot believe it. Because I've-- I've so lost confidence in press. I've so lost-- as you probably know, I've so lost confidence in media. I think it's disgraceful. They do societies that are so false. Everything-- I mean, almost everything. They do so many false. The one time, they could not get the fake dossier printed prior to the election. It came out a number of weeks after the election, and it didn't mean, you know, as much except I said, "Boy, that's terrible. What a fake deal that is." But had that been printed before the election, that could have changed the whole election. And that's what they wanted to do: steal. And Comey and all these lowlives, they wanted to have that fake dossier, which was all phony stuff. They wanted it to go out before the election, George. And you know what? Had that gone out before the election, I-- I don't think I could've-- I don't think I would've had enough time to defend myself--

STEPHANOPOULOS: You clearly believe there was-- a group of people working against you. Do you think President Obama was behind it?

TRUMP: I would say that he certainly must have known about it because it went very high up in the chain. But you're going to find that out. I'm not going to make-- that statement quite yet. But I would say that President Obama had to know about it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How are you going to put this behind you?

TRUMP: Well, I would put it behind. I wouldn't have answered any of these questions. I wouldn't have made the statement except you start off with your first question is about this.

STEPHANOPOULOS: My first question was about Barron, and I had a ton of questions--

TRUMP: Okay, Barron. Okay.

STEPHANOPOULOS: --on North Korea.

TRUMP: Good, you said about Barron. You get immediately onto this. People are fixated. No collusion, no obstruction. Because the attorney general, who's a great gentleman and a highly respected man, based on the evidence given said, "There's no obstruction here." And Rod Rosenstein--

STEPHANOPOULOS: Your hand-picked attorney general.

TRUMP: --agreed with him. Rod Rosenstein-- which is a big thing. He agreed with him.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And you think that's the final word? You're not worried about what happens in Congress?

TRUMP: Look. The Republicans in the Senate, every single one of them that I see know this is a witch hunt. They get it 100 percent. And that's what matters. The Democrats are going to do it only because they might think it helps them. I think it actually hurts them in the election. But there's never been a time in the history of our country where somebody was so

mistreated as I have been. And this should never, ever be allowed to happen to another president again. A previous administration used the intelligence data and the intelligence agencies to spy on my campaign.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Do you believe that President Obama spied on your campaign--


TRUMP: I don't know. But hopefully we're going to find out.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Final question. When this is all over, whether it's a year and a half from now or five and a half years from now, how do you want to be remembered as president?

TRUMP: As a president that loved the people, took care of the people, made our economy tremendous, built up our military, took care of our vets. Our vets are doing fantastically now with choice. Somebody that really loved the country and did a great job, whether it's four years or hopefully it's eight years. Because I still have work to do. Somebody that did a really great job for the country.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. President, thank you for your time.

TRUMP: Thank you very much.

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