



President Donald Trump spoke with POLITICO on Friday, touching on a number of topics from the 2020 election to Attorney General William Barr. | Saul Loeb/Getty Images

WHITE HOUSE

Transcript: POLITICO interviews President Donald Trump on Joe Biden, impeachment, Bill Barr, North Korea

By ANDREW RESTUCCIA, ELIANA JOHNSON and DANIEL LIPPMAN | 05/10/2019 08:22 PM EDT

POLITICO's Andrew Restuccia, Eliana Johnson and Daniel Lippman spoke with President Donald Trump over the phone on Friday, May 10. The 15-minute interview stemmed originally from questions related to a forthcoming article. Below is a transcript of the remainder of the conversation, lightly edited for clarity and to remove extraneous cross-talk:

POLITICO: On David Bossie, I know that the campaign put out this statement on him and him using his group to sort of promote himself and using your image. Have you talked to him at all about that? We've heard that you've been frustrated.

TRUMP: I have not. I have not. I would be disappointed in David if he did that. I guess historically people involved in campaigns go around. I mean, you know, if you look at anybody, anybody running for president. If they win, you always -- you start off with many people running and then you have a group of people that become known. And David was one of the people. David -- you know, many people helped us. Many, many people, you know, helped me to win. And I've studied history, and I see a lot of people do very well after wins. But, I don't know. I just -- You folks did a story on this story, others did a story. I would be disappointed if everything wasn't on the up and up.

POLITICO: Mr. President, you said on Twitter earlier today that you're confident [former Vice President Joe] Biden's going to beat [Vermont Sen.] Bernie [Sanders] and that he'll become the nominee. What makes you think that?

TRUMP: I just think so. Maybe I look at it like my race. If you remember, from the day I came down the escalator until the end of the primaries, I was in the number one position. I was center stage every debate. And you know, nobody came close. And I had -- I mean, I had a big lead pretty much from the beginning, and it got bigger, you know, as it went along, and as people started dropping out. And I look at it as analogous [to this year's Democratic primary] because we had 17 plus one. So we had 18, actually. You know we had Gilmore, if you remember.

WHITE HOUSE

Trump: Biden 2020 reminds me of Trump 2016

By ANDREW RESTUCCIA, DANIEL LIPPMAN and ELIANA JOHNSON

POLITICO: Oh, I remember.

TRUMP: Which a lot of people forget. But anyway, so we actually had 18 people. But they have – what do they have, 21, 22 people now, right? Something like that?

POLITICO: That's right.

POLITICO: Why do you think –

TRUMP: So it seems that -- it seems that many of them aren't registering, as happened with [20]16. It seems as if many of aren't registering with the public. And Biden – for whatever reason, I don't get that -- but he seems to be – you know, have some kind of a register. Whether it's name [recognition] or what. And he seems to be doing well. And Bernie seems to be going in the wrong direction. But everyone else is going -- I mean almost everybody else seems to be not doing very well. And so I would certainly say -- I make it analogous to my race in the sense that, you know, I rode it out. You know, they call it in sports: 'good frontrunner.' I don't know if Biden's a good frontrunner. I heard him talking about [how] he spoke to Margaret Thatcher yesterday. I mean, what he said is he spoke to Margaret Thatcher. I assume he meant Theresa May. So, I don't know, is that a good front runner? I don't know. That was a beauty.

POLITICO: What do you think about [South Bend Mayor] Pete Buttigieg? I know you mentioned him once in your rally, but do you think he's a threat in any way?

TRUMP: Alfred E. Neuman cannot become president of the United States.

POLITICO: And are you -- do you think, with Democrats talking about impeachment, do you think a failed impeachment effort by Democrats would benefit you politically? Because that's what kind of what happened with Bill Clinton in the 1990s. Is that what you –

POLITICO: Do you want them to try to impeach you?

TRUMP: So, you know, it's all based on high crimes and misdemeanors. And if you look at the Mueller report, there was no collusion. There was no conspiracy. And there was no obstruction. He said that in the first half of the sentence, and then said he couldn't prove it. But there was no obstruction. And then the attorney general, based on the facts, and the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, they ruled there was no obstruction. So you have

no crime. And impeachment's based on crime. And, specifically it's based on high crimes and misdemeanors. Not 'plus' or whatever -- it's 'and' misdemeanors. Not separately, but together. So you need both.

And, you know, look, I know it would be a very, very impossible thing. Plus, you know if you haven't had -- in fact, the crimes were actually committed, but they were committed by the Democrats. They were committed by the DNC, the Clinton campaign, Hillary Clinton. Those were the crimes. They weren't committed by us.

WHITE HOUSE

Trump's new nickname for Pete Buttigieg: 'Alfred E. Neuman'

By DANIEL LIPPMAN, ANDREW RESTUCCIA and ELIANA JOHNSON

So I must say, you know you mentioned the word [impeachment], I haven't heard that word in a while. Because since the report came out, it said no collusion, no obstruction, no conspiracy. And that was the end. I haven't heard the word mentioned, really -- essentially -- since the Mueller report came out. And it's not like it's not like they were friends of mine.

POLITICO: Are you also concerned about Sen. Richard Burr [of North Carolina] and that subpoena of Don Jr.? And have you talked to him or Leader [Mitch] McConnell about that in terms of --

TRUMP: No, I haven't spoken to him. And I'm very surprised by it because he went out about four weeks ago and said there is no collusion. So that's maybe a little bit different, you know, than what you're talking about. But I know that my son did testify. I know that [special counsel Robert] Mueller went over his testimony -- and very, very strongly went over his testimony -- and found that he did absolutely nothing wrong. That was an oppo research meeting. And I would say that everybody in Washington has had those meetings. You know, your opponent -- 'hey, we have information on your opponent. Would you like to hear?' I mean, you tell me how many politicians would turn that meeting down. And then it turned out she did that -- it turned out you didn't have any information.

POLITICO: But are you frustrated that Republicans are subpoenaing your son? I mean, these are Republicans that are doing this.

TRUMP: Well, not Republicans. It's a Republican.

POLITICO: A Republican.

TRUMP: Yeah. And I won the state of North Carolina and frankly had another Republican won [the primary], they would not have won the state. I have a great relationship to that state. So I was very surprised. He came in, ran along with me. I didn't know him well, but he ran along with me. So yeah, I was very surprised to see that.

POLITICO: And you saw the Times report that [Trump lawyer] Rudy Giuliani is going to Ukraine to urge them to pursue some investigations? I mean, have you talked to him about that? Does he have your blessing to do that?

TRUMP: I don't know much about it yet. Just very briefly, he had mentioned -- and he's involved with a number of people that are looking into the whole thing because a lot of very bad, a lot of very bad things took place prior to the election. A lot of very, very bad things took place.

You know, they talk about 'investigate the investigators.' And when you look at what's happened with [Pete] Strzok and [Lisa] Page and [Andrew] McCabe and [James] Comey and all of the terrible things that took place, I think, you know. But I have not -- I have not spoken to [Giuliani] at any great length, but I will. When is he leaving? I don't even know. When is he leaving?

POLITICO: He's leaving soon. I think in the next couple days.

TRUMP: I see. Well, I will speak to him about it before he leaves. I'm just curious about that.

POLITICO: But you're supportive of his effort?

TRUMP: That could be something also very separate. I will -- I'll speak to him before he leaves.

2020 ELECTIONS

Trump: Discussing a Biden probe with Barr would be 'appropriate'

By ELIANA JOHNSON, DARREN SAMUELSON, ANDREW RESTUCCIA and DANIEL LIPPMAN

POLITICO: And one more. Have you asked [Attorney General] Bill Barr, or would you ask Bill Barr, to investigate Biden about his son's -- Biden's son's work in Ukraine? That's become a big issue.

TRUMP: Well, I haven't spoken to him about it. But certainly it is a very big issue and we'll see what happens. I have not spoken to him about it. Would I speak to him about it? I haven't thought of that. I mean, you're asking me a question I just haven't thought of. Certainly, it would be an appropriate thing to speak about. But I have not done that as of yet. It could be a very big -- it could be a very big situation. Of course, because he's because he's a Democrat, it's about one 1/100 the size of the fact that if he were Republican, it would be a lot bigger. But anyway, go ahead.

POLITICO: Thank you, Mr. President. The Pentagon said yesterday that North Korea has been firing short-range missiles. They confirm that's what they were yesterday. Do you consider this a breach of trust between you and Kim Jong Un? Are you angry or frustrated by by this? And how do you think we should be responding to that?

TRUMP: No. No. I'm not at all. They're short-range. They're short-range and I don't consider that a breach of trust at all. And you know, at some point I may. But at this at this point, no. These were short-range missiles and very standard stuff. Very standard.

POLITICO: You'd previously previously talked about how proud you were that North Korea had stopped firing these missiles, so you don't consider this a setback?

TRUMP: Well, this is -- actually, some of them weren't even missiles. Some of the things that they fired, they weren't even missiles. But this is short-range, and I don't consider it a breach of trust. I'll let you know when I do. I mean, it's possible that at some point I will. But right now, not at all.

POLITICO: Are you considering a pardon of Paul Manafort or Roger Stone given that this Russian collusion thing is over, in your mind?

TRUMP: Well, the Russian collusion thing has turned out to be a total hoax, and now people are saying it. But I have not given any consideration to any of that at this moment.

POLITICO: And just one more. Have you talked to Steve Bannon at all, and would you ever consider sort of fixing your relationship with him? Or you just have no interest in working with him again?

TRUMP: Well, I always liked Steve and I mean the last seven months or eight months, I mean, you can't have nicer statements stated about yourself than the things he's been saying about me, as you know.

POLITICO: Of course.

TRUMP: ‘The greatest of all time,’ you know, etc., etc. But I haven't. You've seen what he’s said on the various shows and you've seen what he’s written. And that’s very nice, and I appreciate it. But I haven’t spoken to Steve in a while. Haven’t spoken to Steve in a while.

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