

At Louisiana Rally, Trump Lashes Out at Impeachment Inquiry and Pelosi

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By Katie Rogers

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LAKE CHARLES, La. — President Trump left a dizzying trail of developments behind him in Washington on Friday evening, swapping the confines of the capital for a fiery rally where he used foul language, fierce political attacks and personal grievances to light up his supporters for the second day in a row.

The president lashed out at the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, saying that the top Democrat in Congress “hates this country” and ridiculing her decision to begin an impeachment inquiry into his efforts to get foreign countries to dig up damaging information on his rivals.

To the delight of thousands who repeatedly roared their approval, Mr. Trump denounced the impeachment inquiry and condemned what he called the “unholy alliance of corrupt Democrat politicians, deep-state bureaucrats and the fake news media.”

“The radical Democrats’ policies are crazy. Their politicians are corrupt. Their candidates are terrible,” Mr. Trump said to huge applause. “And they know they can’t win on Election Day so they’re pursuing an illegal, invalid and unconstitutional bullshit impeachment.”

Regarding Ms. Pelosi, he said: “She hates the country. Nancy Pelosi hates the United States of America, because she wouldn’t be doing this.”

Mr. Trump’s latest political rally came only a day after he appeared in front of supporters in Minneapolis to deliver a profanity-laced screed against former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and called his younger son, Hunter, “a loser.” Mr. Trump only briefly returned to Washington, where an impeachment inquiry surrounding his efforts to pressure the Ukrainian president to uncover damaging information about the Bidens is rapidly moving forward.

In a head-spinning 24 hours before departing for Louisiana, Mr. Trump announced a preliminary deal with China that will forestall a tariff increase, and the Pentagon announced it would send additional troops to Saudi Arabia — a decision, Mr. Trump said before departing Washington, was made because the Saudis had “agreed to pay us for everything.”

A federal appeals court ruled Friday that the president’s financial team must turn over eight years of Mr. Trump’s financial information to a House committee. Separately, judges in three states ruled against the administration’s efforts to withhold green cards from immigrants who receive public assistance.

And in a closed-door deposition on Capitol Hill, Marie L. Yovanovitch, the former American ambassador to Ukraine, offered a scathing assessment of the Trump administration’s approach to foreign policy, adding that she believed Mr. Trump had personally pushed for her removal for months.

Asked about Ms. Yovanovitch’s testimony before he left Washington, Mr. Trump said that Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president, “didn’t speak favorably” about her during the July 25 phone call that has formed the basis of the impeachment inquiry.

Amid it all, Mr. Trump left again for the campaign trail, which he has long employed as a useful conduit for his most provocative language, particularly when he feels the confines of Washington closing in.

Upon landing, he announced the departure of Kevin McAleenan, the acting secretary of homeland security who had publicly expressed frustration with the job in recent weeks. Once the president took the stage in this southwestern corner of the state, he defended himself against those pursuing impeachment, singling out Ms. Pelosi and Representative Adam Schiff, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Schiff’s decision during a committee hearing to liken the president’s remarks in the July 25 call to a mobster issuing a veiled threat drew the president’s ire on Friday, as it had for weeks.

“He made it up: It was fiction,” Mr. Trump said. “I don’t know, congressman, are you immune from something like that? That should be a crime.”

Throughout the rally, Mr. Trump seemed to abruptly switch emotional channels. He toggled between lashing out at Democrats to acting out an imagined back-and-forth between two former F.B.I. officials, Lisa Page and Peter Strzok, in order to mock them for exchanging unflattering text messages about Mr. Trump during his candidacy. He also paused at one point to interview Little League ballplayers about their pitching speeds.

Eventually, he circled back to his original purpose for the visit: testing his political influence over local races ahead of Saturday’s primary election, largely following the same attack-style playbook he deployed last month in a close North Carolina race.

Earlier on Friday, Mr. Trump urged his supporters to vote for one of two Republican candidates running to replace John Bel Edwards, the state’s Democratic governor.

At the rally, the president said that Mr. Edwards was “100 percent going to drop the Second Amendment” and sought to cast the centrist governor in the same light as other popular target at his rallies, including Ms. Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, the Senate minority leader.

Mr. Trump was joined by Mr. Edwards’s Republican challengers — Ralph Abraham, a third-term congressman, and Eddie Rispono, a Baton Rouge businessman — but did not endorse either. The goal on Saturday, he said, was to keep Mr. Edwards from earning the majority of the vote and avoiding a runoff.

“I need you to send the radical Democrat establishment a loud and clear message,” Mr. Trump told the crowd. “You are going to fire your Democratic governor. He’s done a lousy job.”

But Mr. Edwards remains the leader in the race, with recent polls showing that he is likely to draw about 47 percent of the vote. Keeping with a tradition of Louisiana Democrats, he is largely a centrist, and earlier this year pleased conservatives when he signed a restrictive law that bans abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected.

He is also practiced at the art of political survival in deep-red territories: Last year, he was the only Democratic lawmaker to attend the first state dinner of the Trump administration, an event that honored Emmanuel Macron, the president of France.

On Friday, the governor responded to the president on Twitter by defending his track record on the Second Amendment, and saying that he looked forward to working with Mr. Trump during his second term.

The particulars of the governor’s record — or any of the other more pressing news matters of the day — did not seem to concern Mr. Trump as he spoke for nearly an hour and a half.




As news broke that Rudolph W. Giuliani, one of Mr. Trump’s personal lawyers, was under investigation over whether he broke foreign lobbying laws in his work with Ukraine, the president was speaking about the importance of voter identification laws, and telling his supporters how much he loved them.

Michael D. Shear contributed reporting from Washington.

Common Questions About Impeachment

- **What is impeachment?**
Impeachment is charging a holder of public office with misconduct.
- **Why is the impeachment process happening now?**
A whistle-blower complaint filed in August said that White House officials believed they had witnessed Mr. Trump abuse his power for political gain.
- **Can you explain what President Trump is accused of doing?**
President Trump is accused of breaking the law by pressuring the president of Ukraine to look into former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., a potential Democratic opponent in the 2020 election.
- **What did the President say to the president of Ukraine?**
Here is a reconstructed transcript of Mr. Trump’s call to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, released by The White House.
- **What is the impeachment process like?**
Here are answers to seven key questions about the process.

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