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*Response to Republican House Intelligence Committee Members*

delivered 28 March 2019, Washington, D.C.



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I'm going to turn to our witnesses, who are the subject of the hearing today, but before I do, and as it -- as you have chosen -- instead of addressing the hearing -- to simply attack me, consistent with the President's attacks, I do want to respond in this way.

My colleagues may think it's okay that the Russians offered dirt on a Democratic candidate for President as part of what was described as the Russian government's effort to help the Trump campaign. You might think that's okay.

My colleagues might think it's okay that when that was offered to the son of the President, who had a pivotal role in the campaign, that the President's son did not call the FBI, he did not adamantly refuse that foreign help. No, instead that son said that he would "love" the help of the Russians. You might think it's okay that he took that meeting.

You might think it's okay that Paul Manafort, the campaign chair, someone with great experience in running campaigns, also took that meeting.

You might think it's okay that the President's son-in-law also took that meeting.



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You might think it's okay that they concealed it from the public.

You might think it's okay that their only disappointment after that meeting that the dirt they received on Hillary Clinton wasn't better. You might think that's okay.

You might think it's okay that when it was discovered a year later that they'd lied about that meeting and said it was about adoptions -- you might think it's okay that the President is reported to have helped dictate that lie. You might think that's okay -- I don't.

You might think it's okay that the campaign chairman of a presidential campaign would offer information about that campaign to a Russian oligarch in exchange for money or debt of forgiveness. You might think that's okay -- I don't.

You might think it's okay that that campaign chairman offered polling data, campaign polling data, to someone linked to Russian Intelligence -- I don't think that's okay.

You might think it's okay that the President himself called on Russia to hack his opponents' emails if they were "listening."

You might think it's okay that later that day, in fact, the Russian's attempted to hack a server affiliated with that campaign -- I don't think that's okay.

You might think that it's okay that the President's son-in-law sought to establish a secret back channel of communications with the Russians through a Russian diplomatic facility -- I don't think that's okay.

You might think it's okay that an associate of the President made direct contact with the GRU through Guccifer 2[.0] and WikiLeaks and considered -- that is considered a hostile intelligence agency.

You might think that it's okay a senior campaign official was instructed to reach that associate and find out what that hostile intelligence agency had to say in terms of dirt on his opponent.

You might think it's okay that the national security adviser-designate secretly conferred with a Russian ambassador about undermining U.S. sanctions, and you might think it's okay he lied about it to the FBI.

You might say that's all okay. You might say that's just what you need to do to win.



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But I don't think it's okay: I think it's immoral. I think it's unethical. I think it's unpatriotic. And, yes, I think it's corrupt, and evidence of collusion.

Now, I have always said that the question of whether this amounts to proof of conspiracy was another matter. Whether the special counsel could prove beyond a reasonable doubt, the proof of that crime would be up to the special counsel, and I would accept his decision, and I do. He's a good and honorable man, and he is a good prosecutor. But I do not think that conduct, criminal or not, is okay. And the day we do think that's okay is the day we will look back and say that is the day America lost its way.

And I will tell you one more thing that is apropos of the hearing today. I don't think it's okay that during a presidential campaign, Mr. Trump sought the Kremlin's help to consummate a real estate deal in Moscow that would make him a fortune -- according to the special counsel hundreds of millions of dollars.

I don't think it's okay that he concealed it from the public.

I don't think it's okay that he advocated a new and favorable policy towards the Russians even as he was seeking the Russians' help -- the Kremlin's help -- to make money.

I don't think it's okay that his attorney lied to our committee. There's a different word for that than collusion -- and it's called "compromise." And that is the subject of our hearing today.