



## James Comey: Six claims about Trump from ex-FBI director

16 April 2018



Comey assesses Trump in new memoir

**The latest salvo by former FBI Director James Comey in his feud with President Donald Trump included the charge that the president was morally unfit and may have obstructed justice.**

In a primetime television interview, which precedes his book publication on Tuesday, he also said the Russians may have compromising information on Mr Trump.

The book likens Mr Trump to a mob boss and details his fixation on claims he consorted with prostitutes in Moscow.

On Twitter, Mr Trump branded him "Slippery James Comey", and says he lied to Congress.



**Donald J. Trump**  
@realDonaldTrump

Slippery James Comey, a man who always ends up badly and out of whack (he is not smart!), will go down as the WORST FBI Director in history, by far!

3:07 PM - Apr 15, 2018

93.5K 69.1K people are talking about this

Report



**Donald J. Trump**  
@realDonaldTrump

I never asked Comey for Personal Loyalty. I hardly even knew this guy. Just another of his many lies. His "memos" are self serving and FAKE!

2:32 PM - Apr 15, 2018

97.5K 53.9K people are talking about this

Report

Here is a selection of what Mr Comey said in the interview, with analysis from the BBC's Anthony Zurcher in Washington.

## 1. 'Morally unfit'

ABC News has released **a full 42,000-word transcript of the interview.**

Host presenter George Stephanopoulos on ABC's 20/20 programme interviewed Mr Comey on Sunday night.

When asked if he considered Mr Trump fit to lead, the former FBI director said he did not believe **claims about Mr Trump's mental health**, but did see him as "morally unfit" to be president.

"A person who sees moral equivalence in Charlottesville, who talks about and treats women like they're pieces of meat, who lies constantly about matters big and small and insists the American people believe it, that person's not fit to be president of the United States," he told Mr Stephanopoulos.

Mr Comey was referring to President Trump's argument that "both sides" were at fault for white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, last year.



Mr Trump drew bipartisan criticism for his comments on Charlottesville

**Anthony's take:** *Mr Comey's book, separated from its newsworthy, tell-all portions, is really an extended rumination on the nature of moral leadership. While it may come across as preachy to some, and others will highlight his own (admitted) shortcomings in this regard, Mr Comey has strong views on the standards those who seek high office should meet. In the most dramatic, final portion of his interview, he is definitive in saying Mr Trump has failed.*

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## 2. Obstruction of justice

Another portion of the interview handled the sacking of National Security Adviser Michael Flynn in February 2017 for lying about contacts with the Russian ambassador in Washington.

The former FBI head said Mr Trump had tried to pressure him into dropping any investigation into Mr Flynn.

"I took it as a direction," he told Mr Stephanopoulos. "He's - his words were, though, 'I hope you can let it go'."

- James Comey may be 'slimy', but he's not a liar
- Michael Flynn: Former US national security adviser

Mr Comey says he let the comment pass, but concedes he should perhaps have suggested to the president that it would amount to obstruction of justice.

"It's certainly some evidence of obstruction of justice. It would depend and - and I'm just a witness in this case, not the investigator or prosecutor, it would depend upon other things that reflected on his intent."

Mr Trump strongly denies Mr Comey's account.

**Anthony's take:** *When told that the president disputes his version of events, Mr Comey almost shrugs. "Yeah, well, what am I going to do?" he asks. Both Mr Comey and Mr Trump, in very different language and tactics, are accusing the other of lying. The former director says he has contemporary memos that back up his claims. Mr Trump's defenders want to see those documents, and accuse him of perjury and leaking classified information. For those investigating obstruction of justice - and, ultimately, the America people - it comes down to credibility. Who has it - and who doesn't?*



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Michael Flynn resigned as President Trump's national security adviser after just 23 days

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### 3. Impeachment?

But despite all this, Mr Comey does not think the president should be impeached.

"I think impeaching and removing Donald Trump from office would let the American people off the hook," he told Mr Stephanopoulos.

Instead, he believes the American people are "duty-bound" to remove Mr Trump "directly" at the ballot box.

In the memoir itself, Mr Comey reportedly compares Mr Trump to a crime lord.

- **The Trump-Russia saga in 200 words**
- **FBI boss who went from 'respect' to 'nut'**

He writes that interactions with the president gave him "flashbacks to my earlier career as a prosecutor against the mob".

The former FBI chief was a prosecutor earlier in his career, and helped break up the Gambino crime family.

"The silent circle of assent," he continues. "The boss in complete control. The loyalty oaths. The us-versus-them worldview.

"The lying about all things, large and small, in service to some code of loyalty that put the organisation above morality and above the truth."



**Good Morning America**

@GMA

.@GStephanopoulos: "How strange is it for you to sit here and compare the president to a mob boss?"

@Comey: "Very strange. And I don't do it lightly. And I'm not trying to, by that...suggest that Pres. Trump is out breaking legs and shaking down shopkeepers." #Comey

4:10 AM - Apr 16, 2018

231 145 people are talking about this

Report

**Anthony's take:** *After laying out a stunning moral indictment of Mr Trump, Mr Comey essentially says this is a choice the American people made - and one they have to correct themselves. Barring some sort of damning evidence, he says ending the Trump presidency isn't a job for prosecutors or politicians. The toll of such a move on an already deeply divided American society would be too high. It's an interesting perspective for a former top-ranking law enforcement official to have - particularly one who earlier in the interview asserted that his 2016 investigations were done with no regard to the impact they would have on the "political fortunes" of those involved.*

#### 4. Clinton emails probe

In the TV interview, Mr Comey said his belief that Hillary Clinton would win the 2016 presidential elections was a factor in how he handled the investigation into the Democrat candidate's use of

classified emails on a private server while she was the secretary of state.

"I was operating in a world where Hillary Clinton was going to beat Donald Trump," Mr Comey said.

"And so I'm sure that it - that it was a factor.

"I don't remember spelling it out, but it had to have been. That - that she's going to be elected president, and if I hide this from the American people, she'll be illegitimate the moment she's elected, the moment this comes out."

In July 2016, Mr Comey said Hillary Clinton had been "extremely careless" in her handling of the emails, but the FBI would not press charges.

However, in October, days before the vote, he sent a letter to Congress telling them the FBI was reopening an investigation after finding more emails. The letter went public - and **Mrs Clinton has said she would have won the election** without it.

On 6 November, the FBI said it had completed its review into the new trove of emails and there would, again, be no charges.

**Anthony's take:** *In an unaired portion of the Comey interview, the former director says that the emails discovered in October were from early in Mrs Clinton's tenure as secretary of state, before she started using her private server. If there were evidence of criminal misconduct, it would probably come from this time period. In the end, there was nothing revelatory - but Mr Comey cites this to explain why he made such a dramatic move. He decided to let a political bombshell go off just a week before the election, rather than try to defuse it in private and risk an even bigger explosion in the days after a presidential contest he believed Mrs Clinton would win. History will judge his choice.*

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## 5. 'Moscow prostitutes'

The former FBI boss writes that on at least four occasions Mr Trump raised the matter of unverified claims that he watched prostitutes urinate in a hotel suite during a 2013 Moscow trip.

The allegations surfaced in a raw intelligence dossier compiled by a former British spy who had been hired by Mr Trump's political enemies to dig up dirt on him.

Mr Comey says Mr Trump angrily denied the claims and asked him to have the FBI disprove them because they were "terrible" for his wife, Melania Trump.

He writes that he first broached the matter at a Trump Tower meeting in January 2017 shortly before the president's inauguration.

Mr Comey said in the interview: "He interrupted very defensively and started talking about it, you know, 'Do I look like a guy who needs hookers?'"



Do Trump voters care about the Russia investigation?

"And I assumed he was asking that rhetorically, I didn't answer that, and I just moved on and explained, 'Sir, I'm not saying that we credit this, I'm not saying we believe it. We just thought it very important that you know.'"

Mr Comey added: "I honestly never thought these words would come out of my mouth, but I don't know whether the current president of the United States was with prostitutes peeing on each other in Moscow in 2013. It's possible, but I don't know."

**Anthony's take:** *There is a moment as Mr Comey is recalling his Trump Tower conversation with the president-elect about Russian*

*prostitutes that he expresses amazement over what is taking place, describing it like an out-of-body experience. "I was floating above myself, looking down." It's a sentiment with which many Americans - particularly those who have Mr Comey's establishment sensibilities - can probably identify. Even a year on, they can't quite believe the Trump presidency is really happening - or that the man is governing, tweets and all, the way he campaigned. That aside, the December 2016 meeting was the first between the two men. Afterwards, it should have been clear that they were almost certainly heading on a collision course.*

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## 6. Trump's hair and hands

Mr Comey, who is 6ft 8in (2.03m), says that when he first met the 6ft 3in president-elect, he appeared shorter than he did on TV.

"His face appeared slightly orange," writes Mr Comey, "with bright white half-moons under his eyes where I assumed he placed small tanning goggles, and impressively coifed, bright blond hair, which upon close inspection looked to be all his.

"As he extended his hand, I made a mental note to check its size. It was smaller than mine, but did not seem unusually so."

Elaborating on this in the TV interview, he said: "His tie was too long as it always is... he looked slightly orange up close."

**Anthony's take:** *This interview should put to bed any question about whether Mr Comey has a natural talent for public relations. He sprinkles his comments throughout with the kind of little details and colour that keep an audience engaged. There's the tidbits about the president's personal appearance, his description of drinking wine out of a paper cup on flight home after being fired and his joke in the early days of the Clinton investigation that "nobody gets out alive". Mr Comey would probably make a good politician - if he hadn't spent the past two years, at different points, making almost everybody hate him.*