

'We are under siege, will emerge stronger than ever': Trump to supporters after Comey testimony

09/06/2017 09:25 by admin

Washington: Hours after former FBI director James Comey testified in front of Congress on Thursday, US President Donald Trump said that "we're under siege" but will emerge "bigger and better and stronger than ever." Talking to his evangelical supporters at Faith and Freedom Coalition's annual gathering, Trump said, "We will always support our evangelical community and defend your right and the right of all Americans to follow and to live by the teachings of their faith."

Trump's statement came after Comey testified in front of Congress on Thursday

"And as you know, we're under siege, you understand that. But we will come out bigger and better and stronger than ever. You watch," the president told more than 1,000 activists meeting at a hotel across town from Capitol Hill, the scene of Comey's nationally televised testimony. "You fought hard for me and now I'm fighting hard for all of you," Trump said.

Trump made no reference to James Comey in his remarks to the gathering. But hours before the president's first public comments of the day, Comey told the Senate intelligence committee that Trump tried to get him to pledge loyalty and drop an investigation into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn.

Trump abruptly fired Comey last month. Trump's attorney said the president never asked Comey to stop investigating anyone.

President never directed Comey to stop investigating anyone: Trump's lawyer

Trump's personal attorney Marc Kasowitz read a prepared statement to reporters in response to Comey's testimony, in which he said the president had "never, in form or substance" directed Comey to stop investigating anyone.

He also labeled Comey a leaker, accusing him of "unauthorized disclosures" of "privileged communications" he'd had with the president.

Trump, who spent time meeting with Kasowitz after returning from the speech, also declined to answer shouted questions about the testimony at a panel with governors and local government leaders who had come to the White House to talk infrastructure.

Trump, said one person familiar with his thinking, felt good about the testimony, which proved him right in several cases and included the revelation that Comey had leaked information to reporters. The person spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the president's thinking.

Trump stays off Twitter during Comey testimony, son live-tweets

In a rare show of self-restraint, Trump stayed off Twitter Thursday as Comey testified before the Senate intelligence committee, while his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., tweeted more than 80 times, defending his father and blasting the former FBI director.

Trump Jr. in particular seized on Comey's assertion that he interpreted the president's statement that he "hoped" the FBI would drop its probe into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn as an instruction.

"Knowing my father for 39 years when he 'orders or tells' you to do something there is no ambiguity, you will know exactly what he means," Trump Jr. wrote.

He also pointed to Comey's revelation that he had asked a friend to pass along to the press memos he had written documenting his interactions with Trump.

"Did I miss something or did Comey just say he asked a friend to leak information to the press?" asked Trump Jr. "Is this a joke?"

"That was fun," Trump Jr. declared at the end of the hearing. He and his brother, Eric, now run their father's business in New York.

Trump has a long history of responding to personal slights on Twitter, though his most volatile comments typically arrive in early morning and late-night hours, often when he is by himself and watching negative news coverage of his actions. Trump has been warned by lawyers to watch what he tweets because his comments could be used against him.

Staff also kept the president busy, with a series of meetings and events.

Trump spent Thursday morning meeting with his secretary of state, secretary of defense and national security adviser, discussing North Korea, the Persian Gulf region and other matters, said White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders. He then headed to the Faith and Freedom Coalition's annual conference, where he delivered a speech in front of a friendly crowd.

President Trump not a liar, says White House

Sanders tried to downplay the significance of the dramatic testimony,.

"In terms of the mood in the White House, I would say that it's a regular Thursday at the White House. We're carrying on," she said.

In his testimony, Comey accused the president of telling "lies, plain and simple" when he claimed that the FBI was in disarray and poorly led, and that the workforce had lost confidence in its leader.

Comey also said he'd taken careful notes of his meetings because he worried the president might misrepresent them.

Sanders objected to the characterization. "I can definitively say the president's not a liar," she said.

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