



Sessions' Testimony: "You'll Accuse Me of Lying"

When Attorney General Jeff Sessions (shown) testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee Tuesday as part of that committee's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, he was clearly on guard. The memory of being accused of lying to the Senate during his confirmation testimony was apparently still fresh in his mind.



At more than one point in his testimony, Sessions pointedly addressed the issue of his confirmation testimony, defending his answer that he "did not have communications with the Russians" as part of the Trump campaign.

The attorney general's time before the committee was marked by tension almost from the beginning. He made it clear that there were some things he would not discuss — because of "a long standing policy" in the Department of Justice "not to comment on conversations that the Attorney General had with the president of the United States." While Republican members of the committee recognized that policy, Democrat members seemed never to have heard of it. One Democrat member went so far as to accuse Sessions of ["impeding" and "obstructing" the investigation by "not answering questions."](#)

It was against the backdrop of this tension that Sessions was questioned by Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) about his "communications with Russian officials" — a question he had already answered directly and repeatedly. In fact, he had begun his testimony with a statement addressing the story surrounding his confirmation testimony, explaining:

I have never met with or had any conversation with any Russians or any foreign officials concerning any type of interference with any campaign or election in the United States. Further, I have no knowledge of any such conversations by anyone connected to the Trump campaign. I was your colleague in this body for 20 years, at least some of you. And the suggestion that I participated in any collusion that I was aware of, any collusion with the Russian government to hurt this country which I have served with honor for 35 years, or to undermine the integrity of our democratic process is an appalling and detestable lie. Relatedly, there is the assertion that I did not answer Senator Franken's question honestly in my confirmation hearing.

Colleagues, that is false. I can't say colleagues now — I'm no longer a part of this body, but a former colleague. That is false. This is what happened: Senator Franken [D-Minn.] asked me a rambling question after some six hours of testimony that included dramatic new allegations that the United States intelligence community, the U.S. intelligence community had advised President-elect Trump "That there was a continuing exchange of information during the campaign between Trump's surrogates and intermediaries for the Russian government." I was taken aback by that explosive allegation which he said was being reported as breaking news that very day, and which I had not heard. I wanted to refute that immediately — any suggestion that I was part of such an



activity.

I replied to Senator Franken this way. “Senator Franken, I’m not aware of any of those activities. I have been called a surrogate a time or two in that campaign and I did not have communications with the Russians and I’m unable to comment on it.”

That was the context in which I was asked the question and in that context my answer was a fair and correct response to the charge as I understood it. I was responding to the allegation that surrogates had been meeting with Russians on a regular basis. It simply did not occur to me to go further than the context and to list any conversations that I may have had with Russians in routine situations, as I had many routine meetings with other foreign officials.

So please hear me now. It was only in March, after my confirmation hearing, that a reporter asked my spokesperson whether I had ever met with any Russian officials. This was a first time that question had squarely been posed to me. On the same day, we provided that reporter with the information related to the meeting that I and my staff held in my Senate office with Ambassador Kislyak as well as the brief encounter in July after a speech that I had given during the convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

I also provided the reporter with a list of 25 foreign ambassador meetings that I had had during 2016. In addition, I provided supplemental testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee to explain this event. So I readily acknowledged these two meetings and certainly not one thing happened that was improper in any one of those meetings.

As *The New American* [reported](#) in March — while the liberal mainstream media were accusing Sessions of perjury — there was nothing dishonest in his answer to Senator Franken; The context of the question is the key to the answer. That is what Sessions told the committee Tuesday.

The attorney general’s opening statement on this was clear, direct, and unambiguous. Given such clarity, it requires a special kind of deliberate ignorance for Democrat members of the committee to continue peppering him with questions about it; but pepper him they did. In fact, by the time Harris got around to asking her questions, Sessions had already answered the exact same questions at least seven times. Each time he had answered that he did not recall any other meetings with “the Russians” that he had not already — in his opening statement — disclosed.

None of that stopped Harris from asking, “Did you have any communications with Russian officials for any reason during the campaign that have not been disclosed in public or to this committee?” Sessions answered — again — that he did not recall any.

At this point, Harris pressed him with, “Did you have any communication with any Russian businessman or any Russian nationals?” Sessions began his answer by saying, “I don’t believe I had any conversation with Russian businessmen or Russian nationals. A lot of people were at the convention, it’s conceivable —” Harris cut him off to say she had other questions.

With the clear memory of his question and answer session with Franken during his confirmation testimony, Sessions’ composure changed from his usual calm demeanor to something a good bit sharper. He cut back in with, “Well, you let me qualify — if I don’t qualify it, you’ll accuse me of lying. So I need to be correct as best as I can,” adding, “And I’m not to be able to be rushed this fast. It makes me nervous.”

Sessions’ answers to questions of whether he had communications with Russians as part of a plot to



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on June 14, 2017

undermine the interests of the United States should lay those questions to rest. But, given the fact that he was asked repeatedly after having already answered, those questions are likely to limp along with assistance from the same liberal mainstream media that helped spawn them in the first place.

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