

TRANSCRIPT: HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE
CONGRESSMAN TED LIEU QUESTIONING OF FBI DIRECTOR COMEY
JULY 7, 2016

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I read some of my Republican colleagues press statements and as I sit here today, I am reminded of that quote from Macbeth, “Full of sound and fury signifying nothing.”

I have heard some sound and fury today from Members of the Committee, and the reason they largely signify nothing is because of two fundamental truths that are self-evident.

The first of which: None of the Members of this Committee can be objective on this issue. I can't be objective; I have endorsed Hillary Clinton for President, as have the Democratic members of this committee. My Republican colleagues can't be objective. They oppose Hillary Clinton for President.

Which is why we have you. You are a non-partisan career public servant that has served our nation with distinction and honor and not only can you be objective, it is your job to be objective, to apply the law fairly and equally regardless of politics.

I think it would be important for the American people to get a fuller appreciation of your public service, so let me ask you: Before you were FBI Director, how many years did you serve as a federal prosecutor?

FBI Director James Comey:

I think 15.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

For a period of time you were at Columbia Law School as a scholar and you specialized in national security law. Is that correct?

FBI Director James Comey:

Sometimes I fantasize I still am.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Thank you.

When you served in the Republican Administration of President George W. Bush, you were then the second highest ranking member of the Department of Justice. Is that right?

FBI Director James Comey:

Yes, President Bush appointed me to be U.S. Attorney in Manhattan and then the number two in the Department of Justice.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

When you were confirmed for the FBI Director position the vote was 93-1, is that correct?

FBI Director James Comey:

That's correct.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

With that strong bipartisan support, it's not surprising that Senator Grassley, Republican, said during your confirmation and I quote, "Director Comey has a reputation for applying the law fairly and equally regardless of politics."

In this case, did you apply the law fairly and equally regardless of politics?

FBI Director James Comey:

Yes.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Did you get any political interference from the White House?

FBI Director James Comey:

None.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Did you get any political interference from the Hillary Clinton campaign?

FBI Director James Comey:

None.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

One of the reasons that you are appointed to a fixed term of 10 years, a very long term, is to help is to insulate you from politics, isn't that right?

FBI Director James Comey:

That's correct.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

The second fundamental truth today about this hearing is that none of the members of this committee have any idea what we are talking about because we have not reviewed the evidence personally in this case.

When I served on active duty in the US Air Force in the 1990s, one of my duties was a prosecutor. One of the first things that I learned as a prosecutor is, it is unprofessional and wrong to make allegations based on evidence that one has not reviewed.

So let me ask you, has any member of this committee, to the best of your knowledge, reviewed the 30,000 emails at issue in this case?

FBI Director James Comey:

I don't know. Not to my knowledge.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Has any member of this Committee sat through the multiple witness interviews that the FBI conducted in this case?

FBI Director James Comey:

No. That I know, no.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Has any Member of this Committee received any special information about the files that you kept or other FBI agents kept on this case?

FBI Director James Comey:

Not to my knowledge.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Now let's do a little bit of math here: one percent of 30,000 emails would be 300 emails, is that right?

FBI Director James Comey:

I think that's right.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

30 emails would be one tenth of one percent and three emails would be one hundredth of one percent of 30,000, right?

FBI Director James Comey:

I think that's right.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

Of those three emails, one hundredth of one percent of 30,000, they bore these tiny little classified markings, which is as you described, a "c" with parentheses, correct?

FBI Director James Comey:

Correct.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

So it is possible that a busy person who has sent or received over 30,000 emails might have just missed this marking of a "c" with parentheses. It is possible, correct?

FBI Director James Comey:

Correct.

Congressman Ted Lieu:

So let me now just conclude by stating what some of my colleagues have, which is, there is just the strongest whiff of hypocrisy going on here.

The American public might be interested in knowing that Members of Congress receive security clearances just for being Members of Congress. We get to have private email servers. We get to have private email accounts. We can use multiple devices. We can take devices overseas.

And really, at the end of the day when the American people look at this hearing, they need to ask themselves this question: Do they trust the biased partisan politicians on this committee who are making statements based on evidence that we have not reviewed, or do they trust the distinguished FBI Director?

I would trust the FBI Director.

I yield back.