

The Mueller Report: Now What? Are We Facing Weeks or Months More of Spin?



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By the time the Mueller Report was submitted, speculated on and debated over this past weekend, the country had already endured as many months of PR spin as the time it took for the Special Counsel's Office to conduct the Russia investigation. Are we now facing 22 more months of spin?

All this before anyone has even seen the report with the exception of Robert Mueller, Attorney General William Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Barr told Congress in a four-page summary of the apparently voluminous report that Mueller had found no collusion by Trump or his 2016 election campaign with the Russians. Barr also said that Mueller could not determine if Trump had obstructed

justice but that Mueller didn't exonerate Trump either. Barr went one step further saying there was no evidence to prove obstruction.

The report's submission was always going to be tinged with politics, law, and PR vs. fact and vs. "fake news" and "alternative facts." Witness the hours of TV talking heads since Mueller gave Barr his report last Friday evening.

Here's the issue: The Democrats think Trump is probably guilty of something; they want to see the full report and use it in their multi-pronged probe of Trump in Congress. Trump and the GOP have made "no collusion" and "witch hunt" their mantra for months and after Barr's letter, declared the Mueller Report as total exoneration of the President.

Part of the PR/legal/political problem now with the Mueller probe boils down to two views on the grand jury and criminal justice systems:

A grand jury can indict a ham sandwich. (Surely a favorite of Roger Stone and other Trump allies.)

Not being charged or not being found guilty does not mean someone is innocent. (The Democrats' view.)

The Democrats ask just how many contacts with the Russians did Trump's people have? 100? More? Less? How many of Trump's people were indicted or pleaded guilty in the Mueller probe? A bunch. So, they ask, how can the Mueller Report truly clear Trump? And let us see the report and hear testimony from Mueller and Barr, if needed. (Barr is reviewing how much of the report he can release.)

Democrats also cite the fact that other federal prosecutors and New York prosecutors are continuing investigations of the President, the inaugural committee, his business and foundation. And they add that Trump was also cited in Michael Cohen's criminal campaign finance case as the person ordering

his ex-lawyer to make payoffs to cover up the President's sexual affairs.

Trump's response to all of this: Total exoneration. No collusion. It was an attempted illegal takedown.

He's wrong. After a 22-month investigation, you can't just spin a voluminous report by referring to a short second-hand letter which claims he is innocent. The PR debate over the Mueller Report is far from over,

Despite the PR tactics, we remain a divided country so just spin may not resolve the stalemate. This time, the verdict on Trump and Mueller may be ultimately decided by the voters in 2020.



About the Author: Andrew Blum is a PR consultant and media trainer and principal of AJB Communications. He has directed PR for professional services and financial services firms, NGOs, agencies and other clients. As a PR executive, and formerly as a journalist, he has been involved on both sides of the media aisle in some of the most media intensive crises of the past 25 years. Contact him at ajbcomms@gmail.com or follow him on Twitter: [@ajbcomms](https://twitter.com/ajbcomms)