

# Cohen lawyer backpedals on Trump-Russia claims, as bombshell reports called into question

Michael Cohen's lawyer is backpedaling on bombshell claims he made in recent weeks about his client's knowledge of President Trump's supposed awareness of Russian efforts to influence the 2016 presidential election.

Lanny Davis, a longtime Clinton confidant who now represents the ex-Trump attorney, had been a source for reports saying his client had information that the president knew in advance about the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting involving Donald Trump Jr. and Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya. Davis also suggested that Cohen had "direct knowledge" of Russia hacking into emails of Democratic power players.

But now, Davis is walking back his statements, telling The Washington Post that he "should have been more clear" that he "could not independently confirm what happened."

He said in a separate statement Monday to Fox News: "I take the responsibility for not communicating more clearly my uncertainty. I regret the error."

Trump's alleged knowledge of the Trump Tower meeting was first reported by CNN on July 27. The outlet reported that Cohen was present for a conversation informing Trump of the Russians' offer to provide "dirt" on Hillary Clinton. Cohen witnessed Trump approve the meeting, CNN reported.

The following day, the Post also reported that Cohen witnessed Trump Jr. informing his father about the meeting where they expected to receive information on Clinton; the Post did not confirm that Trump was told the information would come from the Russians.

Trump, following the publication of the CNN report, fired back.

"I did NOT know of the meeting with my son, Don jr. Sounds to me like someone

is trying to make up stories in order to get himself out of an unrelated jam (Taxi cabs maybe?). He even retained Bill and Crooked Hillary's lawyer. Gee, I wonder if they helped him make the choice!" Trump tweeted on July 27.

## **TRUMP FIRES BROADSIDE AT MICHAEL COHEN, DENIES CLAIM ON MEETING WITH RUSSIAN LAWYER**

Over the weekend, Davis clarified his claims.

"I should have been more clear—including with you—that I could not independently confirm what happened," Davis told the Post this weekend.

Davis began walking back the allegations days earlier, when during an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper, he was asked whether there was evidence that Trump knew about the meeting before it happened.

"No, there's not," Davis said.

Trump, again, maintained that he knew nothing of the meeting beforehand, and blasted the reports as "fake news."

"Michael Cohen's attorney clarified the record, saying his client does not know if President Trump knew about the Trump Tower meeting (out of which came nothing!). The answer is that I did NOT know about the meeting. Just another phony story by the Fake News Media!" Trump tweeted Saturday.

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*— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 25, 2018*

The Post revealed in its latest report that the anonymous source in its July 28 story was Davis. CNN, meanwhile, released a statement standing by its report, saying the outlet was "confident" in its reporting.

On Sunday, Trump Jr. blasted CNN as "literal fake news," saying it was "Comical" to watch CNN "covering" for its reporters who "obviously got [the] story wrong."

*Comical to watch @CNN covering for leftist hack @carlbernstein. He & Obama staffer @jimsciutto obviously got story wrong. CNN “stands by” it anyway, defending literal fake news. 3 “reporters” were fired for false CNN hit on @Scaramucci & this is FAR worse! <https://t.co/KdgpXfGhgT>*

*— Donald Trump Jr. (@DonaldJTrumpJr) August 27, 2018*

*When it was bad news for Trump it got insane coverage. Now that we know it was a lie & more of the usual BS it's crickets without a correction. It's almost like there's a pattern here!?!*

*Nets Punt on Davis Blowing Huge Hole in CNN's Trump Tower Bombshell <https://t.co/Z5KTpx8U8R>*

*— Donald Trump Jr. (@DonaldJTrumpJr) August 25, 2018*

Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Ranking Member Mark Warner, D-Va., also put out a statement last week that challenged Davis' earlier comments.

“Mr. Cohen had testified before the Committee that he was not aware of the meeting prior to its disclosure in the press last summer,” Burr and Warner said in a joint statement. “As such, the Committee inquired of Mr. Cohen’s legal team as to whether Mr. Cohen stood by his testimony. They responded that he did stand by his testimony.”

Last week, Cohen pleaded guilty to five counts of tax evasion, one count of making false statements to a financial institution, one count of willfully causing an unlawful corporate contribution and one count of making an excessive campaign contribution. The latter counts pertain to hush-money payments Cohen says Trump was aware of. Cohen could have received up to 65 years in prison if convicted of all charges. However, as part of his plea deal, Cohen agreed not to challenge any sentence between 46 and 63 months.

## **MICHAEL COHEN ADMITS VIOLATING CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS IN PLEA DEAL, AGREES TO 3-5 YEAR SENTENCE**

After the plea deal was struck, Davis also suggested that Cohen would be willing

to interview with Special Counsel Robert Mueller as part of his investigation into Russian meddling and potential collusion with Trump campaign associates in the 2016 presidential election.

Further, Davis suggested that Cohen, a former Trump Organization attorney for over a decade, knew about Russian hacking of Democratic emails.

"I believe that Mr. Cohen has direct knowledge that would be of interest to Mr. Mueller that suggests—I'm not sure it proves—that Mr. Trump was aware of Russian government agents hacking illegally, committing computer crimes, to the detriment of the candidate who he was running against, Hillary Clinton," Davis said last Wednesday on PBS' "News Hour."

But over the weekend, Davis told the Post that he is "not sure. There's a possibility that is the case. But I am not sure."

"I was giving an instinct that he might have something to say of interest to the special counsel [about hacking]," Davis told the Post, but acknowledged "I am just not sure."

Davis also told Bloomberg last week that his client had never been to Prague, countering one of many assertions in the unverified anti-Trump "dossier," this one pertaining to a supposed meeting with Russian officials that Cohen himself has long denied.

*Fox News' Bill Mears contributed to this report.*

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