

Why Did President Donald Trump Fire FBI Director James Comey?

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Former FBI Director James Comey. Photo courtesy of NBC. [/caption]

Summary: President Donald Trump fired the head of the FBI on Tuesday.

This week, President Donald Trump surprised Washington when he fired FBI Director James Comey--the same man who had blasted Hillary Clinton's reputation during the 2016 Presidential Election. The termination came shortly after Comey had allegedly asked for more resources in his investigation to Trump's ties with Russia, and the abruptness of his departure has raised a series of questions--Why did Donald Trump choose *now* to oust Comey? Did Comey bring this all upon himself? Lastly, what's next?

Comey took the reigns of the FBI in 2013, and he had a reputation of being nonpartisan and a pit bull for the truth. However, the positive reputation he had built declined during the 2016 Presidential Election when he announced that he was probing Clinton and the use of her private server to send emails. Many people viewed that as a partisan move, and some, including Clinton, blamed him for her election loss to Trump. Clinton was cleared of those charges, but the damage was done, not only to her campaign but to Comey's credibility.

At the time, Democrats lambasted Comey for speaking out against Clinton before the investigation was completed, but Trump praised him for being brave.

"It took guts for Director Comey to make the move that he made in light of the kind of opposition he had where they're trying to protect her from criminal prosecution," Trump said at a campaign rally in October.

Like the Democrats, Trump's favorable view of Comey soured, however. After Trump was sworn into office, the FBI opened an investigation into the president's ties with Russia, and Comey reportedly wanted to expand it by hiring more people and asking for a bigger budget.

On Tuesday, Trump fired the generally disliked Comey, and the White House explanation was that Comey had botched the Hillary Clinton email investigation. This reason was contradictory to the praise bestowed in October, and it also did not answer the question of--*why now?*

One theory of *why now* is that the firing was a "cover-up." According to the BBC, Trump did not want to be probed about his relationship with Russia's Vladimir Putin and thus had to get rid of the man in charge of the investigation.

"The abruptness and timing of Mr. Comey's dismissal, to put it mildly, is highly suspicious," The BBC stated. "Just over a week ago, the FBI director talked about his agency's investigation into Russian meddling in the US presidential election - and possible Russian ties to the Trump campaign - before a Senate committee. He was scheduled to appear before Congress again to discuss "worldwide threats" on Thursday."

However, with Comey's declining credibility, it could also be said that he could've been fired at any time. While people in Washington are expressing shock at Comey's dismissal, likening Trump to paranoid Richard Nixon, this reaction could be seen as hypocritical because those same voices were earlier saying Comey was bad at his job. For instance, in November, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said he had "no confidence" in Comey's abilities, and many other prominent Democrats lambasted Comey for how he treated Clinton during her campaign.

Republicans also despised Comey for his Clinton treatment, but their reasoning was that he was not tough enough on her.

As head of the FBI, Comey's next big project was investigating Trump's ties with Russia, and again, his actions were met with disapproval--mostly because he kept his findings secret. The man who once publicly spoke about a pending investigation into Clinton was now silent when it came to his investigation with Trump, and although this could've been a reaction to his first blunder, his decision was met with ire. It was damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Before Comey's firing, Attorney General Jeff Sessions was asked by Trump to establish grounds for removal, *The New York Times* said. Last week, Sessions had allegedly written a letter to Trump, citing reasons that Comey had to go.

So while it is unclear what the exact reason for Comey's departure was--cover-up or legitimate termination for incompetence--what we know so far is that Acting Director Andrew McCabe is slated to take Comey's place until an official replacement is named.

Additionally, Schumer has asked for an independent investigation into Trump's alleged ties with Russia, but so far, there has been no announcement of one formed. Although Schumer has rallied Democrats, there must be Republican congress people who also demand an independent inquiry. While some Republicans such as Senator John McCain has expressed disappointment in Comey's firing, there has yet to be any Republicans who have called for the independent investigation.

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