

Rep. Devin Nunes
Opening Statement for Sondland Hearing on Impeachment
November 20, 2019

As I've noted before, the Democrats on this committee spent three years accusing President Trump of being a Russian agent. In March 2018, after a year-long investigation, Committee Republicans issued a 240-page report describing in detail how the Russians meddled in the 2016 elections and making specific recommendations to improve our election security.

Denouncing the report as a whitewash and accusing Republicans of "subverting" the investigation, the Democrats issued their own report focusing on their now-debunked conspiracy theory that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to hack the elections.

Notably, the Democrats vowed to present a further "comprehensive report" after they finished their investigation into Trump's treasonous collusion with Russia. For some completely inexplicable reason, after the implosion of their Russia hoax, the Democrats failed to issue that comprehensive report.

This episode shows how the Democrats have exploited the Intelligence Committee for political purposes for three years, culminating in these impeaching hearings. In their mania to attack the President, no conspiracy theory is too outlandish for the Democrats.

Time and again, they floated the possibility of some far-fetched malfeasance by Trump, declared the dire need to investigate it, and then suddenly dropped the issue and moved on to their next asinine theory. A sampling of their accusations and insinuations includes:

- Trump is a long-time Russian agent, as described in the Steele dossier.
- The Russians gave Trump advance access to emails stolen from the DNC and the Hillary Clinton campaign.
- The Trump campaign based some of its activities on these stolen documents.
- Trump received nefarious materials from the Russians through a Trump Campaign aide.
- Trump laundered Russian money through real estate deals.
- Trump was blackmailed by Russia through his financial exposure with Deutsche Bank.
- Trump had a diabolical plan to build a Trump Tower in Moscow.
- Trump changed the Republican National Committee platform to hurt Ukraine and benefit Russia.
- The Russians laundered money through the NRA for the Trump campaign.
- Trump's son in law lied about his Russian contacts while obtaining his security clearance

It's a long list of false charges, and that's merely a partial list.

Clearly, these ludicrous accusations don't reflect committee members who are honestly searching for the truth. They are the actions of partisan extremists who hijacked the Intelligence Committee, transformed it into an Impeachment Committee, abandoned its core oversight functions, and turned it into a beachhead for ousting an elected President from office.

You have to keep that history in mind as you consider the Democrats' latest catalogue of supposed Trump outrages.

Granted, a friendly call with the Ukrainian president wouldn't seem to rise to the same level as being a Russian agent. But the Democrats were running out of time—if they waited any longer, their impeachment circus would interfere with their own candidates' 2020 campaigns. And so you have to give them points for creativity in selling this absurdity as an impeachable offense.

All this explains why the Democrats have gathered zero Republican support in the House of Representatives for their impeachment crusade. In fact, the vote we held was a bipartisan vote *against* impeachment.

Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and Chairman Nadler—the key figures behind this impeachment—all proclaimed that impeachment is so damaging to the country that it can only proceed with bipartisan support. Are those declarations suddenly no longer true? Did impeachment become less divisive?

Of course not. They know exactly what kind of damage they're inflicting on this nation. But they've passed the point of no return. After three years of preparation work, much of it spearheaded by the Democrats on this committee, using all the tools of Congress to accuse, investigate, indict, and smear the President, they stoked a frenzy among their most fanatical supporters that they can no longer control.

And so they've zeroed in on an anonymous whistleblower complaint that was cooked up in cooperation with Democrats on this very committee. They lied to the American people about that cooperation and refuse to let us question the whistleblower to discover the truth.

Meanwhile, the Democrats lash out against anyone who questions or casts doubt on this spectacle.

- When Ukrainian President Zelensky denies anything improper happened on the phone call, the Democrats say he's a liar.
- When journalists report on Ukrainian election meddling and Hunter Biden's position on the board of a corrupt Ukrainian company, the Democrats label them conspiracy theorists.
- When the Democrats can't get any traction for their allegations of a quid pro quo, they move the goalposts and accuse the President of extortion, then bribery, and as a last resort, obstructing justice.

The American people sent us to Washington to solve problems, not to wage scorched-earth political warfare against the other party. This impeachment is not helping the American people, it's not a legitimate use of taxpayer dollars, and it's not improving our national security.

In closing, the Democrats fake outrage that President Trump used his own channel to communicate with Ukraine. I'll remind them that our first president, George Washington, directed his own diplomatic channels to secure a treaty with Great Britain. If my Democratic colleagues were around in 1794, they'd want to impeach him too.