

Trump's Reaction to Mueller's Death: 'Good, I'm Glad.'

The president has been known to disparage foes after their deaths. His response to Mr. Mueller's death drew criticism from Republicans and Democrats.



By Erica L. Green

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President Trump on Saturday celebrated the death of Robert S. Mueller III, the former F.B.I. director who was tapped as a special counsel to investigate Russia's efforts to meddle in the 2016 presidential election and tip the result in Mr. Trump's favor.

"Robert Mueller just died. Good, I'm glad he's dead. He can no longer hurt innocent people!" Mr. Trump wrote on social media, minutes after Mr. Mueller's passing was announced.

The president has been known to disparage foes after their deaths, including the director Rob Reiner, drawing criticism from friends and critics. His coarse remarks on Saturday capped a yearslong grudge against Mr. Mueller, whom he accused of leading a "witch hunt" against him in his first term. His words were a stark contrast to statements issued by his predecessors.

"Bob dedicated his life to public service," former President George W. Bush said, praising Mr. Mueller's combat record and stewardship of the F.B.I. after Sept. 11, 2001. Mr. Mueller helped prevent "another terrorist attack on U.S. soil," Mr. Bush added.

Former President Barack Obama, who asked Mr. Mueller to stay on for two more years as F.B.I. director, said in a social media post on Saturday that it was Mr. Mueller's "relentless commitment to the rule of law and his unwavering belief in our bedrock values that made him one of the most respected public servants of our time."

Mr. Mueller, a Vietnam War veteran and Purple Heart recipient who led the F.B.I. for 12 years, had long enjoyed bipartisan favor until he was appointed in 2017 to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 election and any ties between Moscow and members of Mr. Trump's campaign.

Mr. Trump's statement drew rebuke from Republicans and Democrats.

Representative Don Bacon, Republican of Nebraska, said that Mr. Trump's comment was "un-Christian-like behavior" and "wrong."

"It's so unnecessary," Mr. Bacon said in an interview. "It's a self-error. People hate it."

Representative Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said in a post on X that Mr. Trump's words were "characteristically vile and predictably deranged."

"But the important thing to remember is that Trump never said anything remotely so negative or definitive about the death of his longtime best friend Jeffrey Epstein," Mr. Raskin wrote.

The Justice Department named Mr. Mueller special counsel eight days after Mr. Trump fired James B. Comey, who as F.B.I. director was investigating the interactions between the Trump campaign and a Russian covert operation.

The day after Mr. Trump dismissed Mr. Comey, he told the Russian foreign minister and the Russian ambassador in the Oval Office that "I just fired the head of the F.B.I. He was crazy."

"I faced great pressure because of Russia," Mr. Trump said to them. "That's taken off."

Mr. Trump was rattled after hearing of Mr. Mueller's appointment, knowing his reputation. "Oh, my God," he said. "This is terrible. This is the end of my presidency."

In 2019, Mr. Mueller issued a report about how the Russian government "interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion," and detailed a monthslong effort by Mr. Trump to thwart the federal investigation.

Mr. Mueller laid out how his team of prosecutors wrestled with whether Mr. Trump's actions amounted to obstruction of justice. They ultimately chose not to charge Mr. Trump, citing legal and factual constraints. But they also declined to exonerate him.

The report concluded that Mr. Trump was elected with the help of a foreign power, and it detailed meetings between Mr. Trump's advisers and Russians seeking to influence the campaign and the presidential transition team.

The report also said that the Trump campaign expected it would benefit from Russia's efforts. The investigation did not establish, however, that members of the campaign had conspired or coordinated with the Russian government. The inquiry led to charges against more than 30 people and three companies on more than 100 criminal counts.

Mr. Mueller concluded that there was "insufficient evidence" that Mr. Trump or his aides had engaged in a criminal conspiracy with the Russians.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly called the Russian collusion investigations a "hoax."