

Trump, the 'Very Stable Genius,' Is Falling Apart as Mueller Seeks Interview

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The tide of discussion of President Trump's mental competence is rising along with the alarm of the president's lawyers. As special prosecutor Robert Mueller [seeks an interview](#) with President Trump, the president's legal representatives are grappling with the challenge of a talkative client who alternates between [self-serving lies](#) and [self-destructive truths](#) while sowing doubts among his own closest aides about his mental stability.



While Trump has proclaimed himself, via Twitter, to be a "[very stable genius](#)," the members of his staff have their doubts, according to Michael Wolff, author of *Fire and Fury*, a book about the first year of the Trump presidency. Wolff wrote that "100 percent" of the people close to the president with whom he spoke concluded Trump was "incapable of functioning in his job."

The publication of Wolff's book coincides with a [report](#) earlier this week that revealed a dozen Capitol Hill lawmakers met with a psychiatrist to question the president's mental health, as well as stories that Mueller wants to interview Trump in the next few weeks.

Ty Cobb, Trump's personal lawyer, is exploring the possibility that Trump could answer questions in writing or submit an affidavit—anything it seems but speaking in person with the former FBI director and his team of experienced prosecutors. One federal prosecutor called Cobb's plan "[laughable](#)."

But Trump's legal vulnerabilities are no joke.

"Allowing prosecutors to interview a sitting president who has a history of hyperbolic or baseless assertions carries legal risk for him," [notes](#) the New York Times. "Mueller has already brought charges against four of...Trump's former aides... [with] lying to the authorities."

The Washington Post offers [six burning questions](#) for Trump, focusing on his statements about the firings of National Security Adviser Michael Flynn and FBI Director James Comey.

Seth Abramson, legal pundit from the University of New Hampshire, poses [20 questions](#) he says Trump is likely to face about the possibility of pre-inauguration collusion with Russian. Each

question might involve 25 to 50 follow-up questions, Abramson says.

On many of these queries, Trump faces a dilemma. If he sticks to his story that nobody in his campaign had [contact with Russia](#), which has been discredited by Donald Trump Jr.'s tweets and George Papadopoulos' plea agreement, he risks making false statements under oath, something four of his aides have already been charged with.

If Trump changes his story, he risks confirming that he sought to obstruct the probe of his campaign, a central focus of Mueller's investigation.

'Something Amiss'

But whether Trump is willing or able to tell the truth depends on the assumption that he is mentally competent—something that even those around him doubt.

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said last August that Trump lacks the "stability" and "some of the competence" to be successful as president.

Wolff's book shows that discussion of the president's mental health has even reached Trump's aides in the White House. The 25th Amendment, which allows for the removal of the president if he is deemed "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office," is a continual topic of conversation in the West Wing, according to Wolff.

Former White House aide Steve Bannon told associates in August that there was a 33 percent chance Trump would be forced from office by a threat from the Cabinet to invoke the 25th Amendment.

Trump has been in this position before. Throughout his checkered business career, Trump has sat for depositions before and [shown discipline](#) when under oath. According to the Times, his testimony in civil cases reveals a canny ability to avoid being cornered and a frank acknowledgment that he uses "truthful hyperbole" or "innocent exaggeration."

Whether Trump can repeat such a performance in his current state is uncertain.

Wolff told [BBC's Radio 4](#) that he overheard the president's aides question his mental competence.

"The truth is, over this period that I witnessed, this seven or eight months, they all came to the conclusion gradually at first, then faster and faster, that something was unbelievably amiss here," Wolff explained. "That this was more peculiar than they ever imagined it could be."

Mueller's questions will test two features of Trump's mental health. Wolff told the BBC that these senior aides also described the president as childish and having a need for "immediate gratification." Will the president seek the immediate gratification of sticking with prior statements known to be false?

Or will he even remember the questions? Wolff told CNN's Don Lemon that everyone around Trump knows his memory is failing.

"You cannot listen to this man talk without at least contemplating the possibility that something is grievously amiss," Wolff said.

Soon Robert Mueller will be listening to Trump and contemplating the possibility that the president of the United States is both criminally liable and mentally incompetent.

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