

Paul Ryan: The President's Reaction to James Comey Is 'Understandable'

Don't expect the Republican-controlled House of Representatives to move forward with articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump anytime soon—especially after former FBI Director James Comey's attacks during his testimony Thursday before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In fact, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) said it's now "understandable" why the president had grown so frustrated with the former director and why Comey was ultimately fired. Those comments came during the speaker's weekly press conference, where he planned to discuss progress on the Republican agenda, but was instead hounded by the media about the former director's testimony.

The speaker said he hadn't cleared his schedule to listen to Comey's testimony, although he did feel it was important. He did note, however, that he had read the former director's opening statement, which had been released by the Senate Intelligence Committee the day before. That didn't prevent him from weighing in on what he had read.

"I think people now realize why the president is so frustrated," he said. "When the FBI director tells him on three different occasions he's not under investigation, yet the speculation swirls around the political system that he is, that's frustrating. Of course the president is frustrated. I think that people now know why he was so frustrated, because this speculation was allowed to swirl when he was being directly told by the FBI director he wasn't under investigation."

The speaker was also asked to weigh in on Comey's

recollections of his one-on-one conversations with the president. Ryan said he would not speculate on those conversations, because it includes a high degree of "he said, he said." He said part of the problem that hasn't been adequately addressed is the president is a relative novice when it comes to understanding the established communication protocols in government.

"Of course there needs to be a degree of independence between DOJ, FBI and the White House, and a line of communication is established," he added. "The president's new at this. He's new to government. So he probably wasn't steeped in the long-running protocols that establish the relationships between DOJ, FBI and White Houses. He's just new to this."

The speaker said the president "wants to get things done for the American people," and the investigation into the alleged "Russian Narrative" has put a cloud of suspicion on his administration that is making it difficult to get that accomplished. He said the president simply "wants to deliver" on the reforms he promised during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Asked by a reporter if House Republicans would be similarly inclined not to impeach a Democratic president who did the same thing, he remarked that there would be no reason to impeach on those grounds. Even late Thursday evening, some House Democrats were still pushing for impeachment, even as their colleagues in the Senate were reluctant to say there was any evidence whatsoever to link the president and the Russian government at all.