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Importance: High

I like the confidence that Bob talked about it it's a real lesson of how to be strong 🙌

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/09/04/transcript-phone-call-between-president-trump-journalist-bob-woodward/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.7fb34bc85d22

Transcript: Phone call between President Trump and journalist Bob Woodward

[Aaron Blake](#)

President Trump and Bob Woodward discuss Woodward's new book, "Fear," before its publication. (The Washington Post)

Bob Woodward, an associate editor at The Washington Post, sought an interview with President Trump as he was [writing "Fear," a book about Trump's presidency](#). Trump called Woodward in early August, after the manuscript had been completed, to say he wanted to participate.

Over the course of 11-plus minutes, Trump repeatedly claimed his White House staff hadn't informed him of Woodward's interview request — despite also admitting Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) had told him Woodward wanted to talk. He also started the phone call by saying Woodward had "always been fair" to him, but by the end he said the book would be "inaccurate."

This is a transcript of that call, with key sections highlighted and annotated. To see an annotation, click on the yellow, highlighted text.

Trump: Hello, Bob.

BW: President Trump, how are you?

Trump: How are you? How are you doing? Okay?

BW: Real well. I'm turning on my tape recorder, with your permission.

Trump: Oh, that's okay. That's okay. I don't mind that at all.

BW: I'm sorry we missed the opportunity to talk for the book.

Trump: Well, I just spoke with Kellyanne [Conway] and she asked me if I got a call. I never got a call. I never got a message. Who did you ask about speaking to me?

BW: Well, about six people.

Trump: They don't tell me.

BW: A senator. I talked to Kellyanne about it two and a half months ago.

Trump: [?].

BW: She came for lunch.

Trump: Well, it's too bad. Of course, you and I had a conversation a couple of years ago, and so that I think got you there a little bit. And we had a conversation many years ago, if you remember, in Trump Tower.

BW: Yeah, I do.

Trump: That has to be 20 years ago. And you were thinking about doing a book about me then, which is interesting. Who knew it would've been on this subject? Right? That was not in the cards at that time.

BW: That's right. Well, I'm sorry, I . . .

Trump: I still remember that.

BW: I spent a lot of time on this, talked to lots of people.

Trump: All right. Good.

BW: And as you know and are living, we are at a pivot point in history.

Trump: Right.

BW: And I would've liked to have done that, and I maximized my effort, and somehow it didn't get to you, or . . .

Trump: It's really too bad, because nobody told me about it, and I would've loved to have spoken to you. You know I'm very open to you. I think you've always been fair. We'll see what happens. But all I can say is the country is doing very well. We're doing better economically just about than at any time. We're doing better on unemployment maybe than ever. You know, I mean, if you look at the unemployment numbers, you've heard me say it. And we're doing better on unemployment than just about ever. We're having a lot of — a lot of companies are moving back into our country, which would've been unheard of two years ago. If the other administration or representatives of it had kept going, had kept — you know, if the other group had won, I will tell you, that you would have, I think you'd have a GDP of less than zero. I think we would've been going in the wrong direction. Because regulations are such a big part of what we've done, Bob.

BW: Well, I understand that point of view. And as you know, it's also a difficult time where the political system and you and my business is being tested.

Trump: Yeah. Yeah.

BW: I take it very seriously. I've done books on eight presidents, going back from Nixon to Obama.

Trump: Right.

BW: And I learned something about reporting, frankly, Mr. President.

Trump: Good.

BW: I've got to go talk to people and see them outside of the White House and outside of their offices, and gained a lot of insight and documentation. And it's — you know, it's a tough look at the world and your administration and you.

Trump: Right. Well, I assume that means it's going to be a negative book. But you know, I'm some — I'm sort of 50 percent used to that. [Laughter] That's all right. Some are good and some are bad. Sounds like this is going to be a bad one.

BW: It was a chance missed, and I don't know how things work over there in terms of ...

Trump: Very well. We ...

BW: ... getting to you.

Trump: Well, if you would call Madeleine [Westerhout] in my office ... Did you speak to Madeleine?

BW: No, I didn't. But I ...

Trump: Madeleine is the key. She's the secret. Because she's the person ...

BW: Well, I talked to Raj [Shah] about it. I talked to ... I talked to Kellyanne.

Trump: Well, a lot of them are afraid to come and talk, or — you know, they are busy. I'm busy. But I don't mind talking to you. I would've spoken to you. I spoke to you 20 years [ago] and I spoke to you a year and a half or two years ago.

[\[Listen to Woodward and Trump's call on The Post's "Can He Do That?" podcast\]](#)

BW: A couple of years ago, I understand.

Trump: And I certainly don't mind talking to you, and I wish I could've spoken to you. But nobody called my office. I mean, you went through, I guess, different people. ...

BW: Well, Mr. President, how can I spend all this time talking to people and — like Kellyanne and Raj and Republican senators?

Trump: Who were the senators? No, they never called me about it.

BW: Senator [Lindsey] Graham said he had talked to you about talking to me. Now, is that not true?

Trump: Senator Graham actually mentioned it quickly in one meeting.

BW: Yes. Well, see. And then nothing happened.

Trump: That is true. That is true. Well, that — no, but that is true. Mentioned it quickly, not like, you know, and I would certainly have thought that maybe you would've called the office. But that's okay. I'll speak to Kellyanne. I am a little surprised that she wouldn't have told me. In fact, she just walked in. [*to Kellyanne*] I'm talking to Bob Woodward. He said that he told you.

Conway: Yes.

Trump: About speaking to me. But you never told me. Why didn't you tell me?

Conway: [*inaudible*].

Trump: I would've been very happy to speak to him. All right, so what are you going to do?

BW: Well ...

Trump: So I have another bad book coming out. Big deal.

BW: ... it goes on, and I ... What you can count on is that I've been very careful. And Evelyn, are you on?

EMD: Yes.

BW: Evelyn Duffy, who's my assistant, Mr. President.

Trump: Hello, Evelyn.

BW: She transcribed all the tapes because, with permission, I taped people for hundreds of hours.

Trump: Good.

BW: And I think there's nothing in this book that doesn't come from a firsthand source. Is that correct, Evelyn?

EMD: I believe that's —

Trump: But are you naming names? Or do you just say sources?

BW: Yeah, well, it names real incidents, so ...

Trump: No, but do you name sources? I mean, are you naming the people, or just say, people have said?

BW: I say, at 2:00 on this day, the following happened, and everyone who's there, including yourself, is quoted. And I'm sorry I didn't get to ask you about these ...

Trump: I mean, you do know I'm doing a great job for the country. You do know that NATO now is going to pay billions and billions of dollars more, as an example, than anybody thought possible, that other presidents were unable to get more? And it was heading downward. You do know all of the things I've done and things that I'm doing? I'm in the process of making some of the greatest trade deals ever to be made. You do understand that stuff? I mean, I hope.

BW: Certainly, I understand and I would've loved to go through a discussion with you about NATO, because this goes back to early in your administration and your concern about it, and the agreement that the countries have that they would increase their defense contribution, what is it, by the year 2024? And you know . . . So anyway, we are . . .

Trump: Well, you know last year, if you see the secretary, [Jens] Stoltenberg, he said I believe \$44 billion just last year, and that was from last year's meeting. And this year it's much more money they've agreed to put up. So it's a tremendous amount of money. No other president has done it. It was heading down in the opposite direction. So I don't know if you're going to report it that way; probably not. But that's too bad, but that's all right, but you know, one of those things.

BW: Everything is going to be factual. And it is not a good thing for my business, if I may say this to you, Mr. President, to the presidency, or to the country, to not have real, full exchanges on these. And I broke my spear on it trying to get to you.

Trump: Well, other than Lindsey [Graham], who did quickly mention it, nobody mentioned it.

BW: You say Kellyanne's there, ask her.

Trump: Nobody told me about it. Well, let me ask her. Why don't you speak to Kellyanne. Ask her. She never told me about it.

[Conway takes the phone.]

BW: Kellyanne?

Conway: Bob, how are you? Hi.

BW: Hi. Remember two and a half months ago you came over and I laid out, I wanted to talk to the president? And you said you would get back to me?

Conway: I do. And I put in the request. But you know, they — it was rejected. I can only take it so far. I guess I can bring it right to the president next time.

BW: Yeah.

Conway: But I try to follow all the protocols, or else I'm accused of being somebody who doesn't follow protocol.

BW: President Trump, I just want you to know I made every effort.

Conway: But you had talked to [former White House communications director] Hope [Hicks], right, who said no?

BW: Listen, I talked to anyone I could. [Laughs]

Conway: You talked to a number of people and they all said no?

BW: I talked to Raj.

Conway: Raj.

BW: He was going to work it out.

Conway: Hope. [Me?].

[*The president says something in the background that is inaudible.*]

Conway: I said you tried talking to everybody? What about when you interviewed, like, other people? They all said yes? That they'd try?

BW: Yeah, well, about six or seven people. I tried. And I couldn't have — you and I spent a whole lunch on it, Kellyanne. And I said, I want to cover the substantive issues in foreign policy and domestic policy. And you said you would get back to me. Nothing.

Conway: Yeah. So, I did. I presented it to the people here who make those decisions, but . . .

BW: Who are the people?

Conway: But anyway, I'll give you back to the president. And I'm glad to hear that you tried through seven or eight different people. That's good. You should tell him all the names. [*Laughs*] Thank you.

Trump: But you never called for me. It would've been nice, Bob, if you called for me, in my office. I mean, I have a secretary. I have two, three secretaries. If you would've called directly — a lot of people are afraid . . . Raj, I hardly have . . . I don't speak to Raj.

BW: Kellyanne is a . . .

Trump: I do, I do, and Kellyanne went to somebody, but she didn't come to me.

BW: Well, does she have access to you?

Trump: And she should've come to me. She does have access to me. Absolutely. She has direct access, but she didn't come to me. And you know what? That's okay. I'll just end up with another bad book. What can I tell you?

BW: It's surprising to me that these people — did Raj have access to you?

Trump: Not really, but he would've been able to do it. But I have an office. You have the office number. I have an office that's directly into my office.

Conway: [*inaudible in background*]

Trump: It doesn't matter. Let me tell you what matters: The economy is the best it's been in many, many decades. And it's going to get a lot better. And the country is doing very well. That's what's important.

BW: Yes, sir. I thought I would . . .

Trump: We're doing a good job.

BW: . . . never kind of say, let's not talk about this because the book is done to a president . . .

Trump: Yeah, I know.

BW: . . . and, but that's the position we're in. And it's one I tried to avoid. You need to know I made maximum effort.

Trump: All right. It's too bad.

BW: Yes, sir.

Trump: I'm just hearing about it. And I heard — I did hear from Lindsey, but I'm just hearing about it. So we're going to have a very inaccurate book, and that's too bad. But I don't blame you entirely.

BW: No, it's [?] — it's going to be accurate, I promise.

Trump: Yeah, okay. Well, accurate is that nobody's ever done a better job than I'm doing as president. That I can tell you. So that's . . . And that's the way a lot of people feel that know what's going on, and you'll see that over the years. But a lot of people feel that, Bob.

BW: I believe in our country, and because you're our president, I wish you good luck.

Trump: Okay. Thank you very much, Bob. I appreciate it. Bye.

[*Call ends*]

[*Recording ends*]

Regards,
Aziza

Sent from my iPhone