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Subverting Justice': Senate panel details Trump pressure campaign at DOJ to overturn election

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On the very day that Attorney General William Barr left office in late December, then-President Donald Trump and top White House aides began a "relentless" pressure campaign aimed at interim Justice Department leaders, including acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, to overturn the results of the 2020 election, according to a new Senate committee report.

The effort included nine calls and meetings with Rosen and acting Deputy Attorney General Richard Donoghue, contacts that included "near-daily outreach" to the department, a Senate Judiciary Committee investigation found. The White House push continued right up to the deadly Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol, when a mob of Trump supporters sought to block Congress' certification of President Joe Biden's election.

Among the committee's findings are the efforts by then-Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Clark, who repeatedly sought to "induce Rosen into helping Trump's election subversion scheme" by telling Rosen that he would decline Trump's offer that he take Rosen's place if Rosen agreed to join the election fraud scheme.

The report also provided confirmation that Mark Meadows, then serving as Trump's chief of staff, pressured Rosen on "multiple occasions" to launch election fraud investigations, "violating longstanding restrictions on White House intervention in DOJ law enforcement matters."

According to the report, Meadows attempted to push Rosen to meet with Trump's outside lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, who was waging a parallel legal campaign in the courts, where he pressed debunked allegations of voter fraud in multiple states.

The report includes a dramatic recounting of a contentious Jan. 3 Oval Office meeting in which Donoghue warned that a mass resignation of Justice officials and federal prosecutors would

follow if Trump moved to replace Rosen with Clark to aid the president's election subversion scheme.

According to testimony provided by Donoghue and Rosen, the resignations would not be confined to the Justice Department. During the three-hour meeting, the officials said, White House Counsel Pat Cipollone and Patrick Philbin, deputy counsel, also threatened to tender their own resignations, reportedly calling Clark's efforts to pursue unfounded voter fraud allegations as "murder-suicide pact."

Following the meeting, Rosen and Donoghue learned that they had prevailed in an email from another Justice official: "I only have limited visibility into this, but it sounds like Rosen and the cause of justice won," the email stated. "We will convene a call when Jeff (Rosen) is back in the building (hopefully shortly). Thanks."

"Today's report shows the American people just how close we came to a constitutional crisis," Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said. "Thanks to a number of upstanding Americans in the Department of Justice, Donald Trump was unable to bend the Department to his will. But it was not due to a lack of effort. Donald Trump would have shredded the Constitution to stay in power."