

Trump's ex-lawyer Cohen would not accept pardon: lawyer

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen would not accept a presidential pardon, his attorney said on Wednesday, a day after Cohen pleaded guilty to eight criminal charges and said he acted at the direction of Trump.

In a round of television interviews, Cohen's attorney, Lanny Davis, said Trump's former longtime lawyer wanted no part in what he saw as the president's abuse of his clemency power. Cohen also questioned Trump's loyalty to the United States and saw him as unfit to hold office, Davis added.

"He will not, and does not want anything from Donald Trump," Davis told MSNBC.

In dramatic testimony on Tuesday, Cohen told a federal court in Manhattan that Trump had directed him to arrange payments ahead of the 2016 presidential election to silence two women who said they had affairs with Trump. He pleaded guilty to charges of tax evasion, bank fraud and campaign finance violations.

His plea came as former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort was found guilty on eight charges in his financial fraud trial stemming from the federal investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. election and possible coordination with the Trump campaign.

The two findings of guilt ratchet up the political pressure for Trump and fellow Republicans ahead of November's congressional elections in which Democrats are seeking to regain control of Congress.

It also increases pressure on Trump personally.

Representatives for the White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether Trump would consider pardoning Cohen, but Trump himself dismissed his former longtime attorney in a post on Twitter on Wednesday.

"If anyone is looking for a good lawyer, I would strongly suggest that you don't retain the services of Michael Cohen!" Trump wrote.

Trump counsel Rudy Giuliani has said there is no allegation of wrongdoing in the charges against Cohen.

While Cohen did not name Trump in court on Tuesday, Davis again on Wednesday accused the president of being directly involved.

Davis has said he believes Cohen had information that would be of interest to Mueller, and in his interview with MSNBC on Wednesday suggested that it was directly tied to Russian attempts to interfere in the 2016 election.

Moscow has denied findings from the U.S. intelligence community that Russia interfered with the election with the aim of boosting Trump and hampering his Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton. Trump has also denied any collusion with his campaign.

Cohen had “information ... regarding both knowledge of a conspiracy to corrupt American democracy by the Russians and the failure to report that knowledge to the FBI,” Davis told MSNBC.

He added, on CNN, that “Cohen has knowledge that would be of interest to the special counsel about whether Donald Trump knew ahead of time about the hacking of emails.”

A U.S. grand jury has indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers on charges of hacking the computer networks of Clinton’s campaign and the Democratic Party.

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U.S. President Donald Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, leaves the Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Court House in lower Manhattan, New York City, U.S. August 21, 2018. REUTERS/Mike Segar

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