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SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE  
JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

CONTINUED INTERVIEW OF: SHEALAH CRAIGHEAD

Wednesday, June 29, 2022

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held via Webex, commencing at 10:10 a.m.

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2 Appearances:

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5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

6 THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

7

8 [REDACTED], SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

9 [REDACTED] CHIEF CLERK

10 [REDACTED], PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

11 [REDACTED], SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

12

13

14 For SHEALAH CRAIGHEAD:

15

16 ADAM KAUFMANN

17 E. JON A. GRYSKIEWICZ

18 LEWIS BAACH KAUFMANN MIDDLEMISS PLLC

1

2

[REDACTED] Let's go on the record.

3

So this is a resumed transcribed interview of Ms. Shealah Craighead conducted by the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol pursuant to House Resolution 503.

6

And, Ms. Craighead, we have met before, but if you could please introduce yourself again just for the record, I'd appreciate it.

8

Ms. Craighead. Sure. Good morning.

9

My name is Shealah Craighead. I had the role of the director of the White House photo department and the official chief photographer to President Donald Trump during the entire administration.

12

[REDACTED] Great. Thank you, Ms. Craighead.

13

And, counsel, if you don't mind introducing yourself just for the record as well.

14

Mr. Kaufmann. Good morning.

15

Adam Kaufmann from Lewis Baach Kaufmann Middlemiss, representing

16

Ms. Craighead. Thanks.

17

[REDACTED] Excellent.

18

Mr. Gryskiewicz. And Jon Gryskiewicz, also from Lewis Baach, also for Ms.

19

Craighead.

20

[REDACTED] Thank you both.

21

So just like last time, it's the same people on our side. My name is [REDACTED]

22

I'm a senior investigative counsel. And with me today is [REDACTED] also a senior investigative counsel for the committee.

24

Just as a reminder, the official record is done via a court reporter, stenographer.

25

And so as they take it down, it's just helpful if you let me finish my question before

1 answering and I'll let you finish your answer before asking the next question.

2 And nonverbal responses, like shaking your head, can't really be taken down. So  
3 if we ask you to repeat an answer, it's only for the benefit of the transcript.

4 And then, of course, just like I reminded before, not specific to you,  
5 Ms. Craighead, but we remind all our witnesses that it is unlawful to deliberately provide  
6 false information to Congress.

7 So, otherwise, everything remains the same. And do you have any questions?

8 Ms. Craighead. No, I do not.

9 [REDACTED] Okay. Very good. Then let's get right into it.

10 EXAMINATION

11 [REDACTED]

12 Q So I want to talk to you a little bit about January 7th, the day after the attack  
13 on the U.S. Capitol. And I understand that you were present while the President filmed  
14 some remarks and perhaps were developing remarks as well. Can you tell us what you  
15 remember of that?

16 A Sure. I remember that day was -- the taping in particular was on the  
17 schedule, but it was scheduled for a time period that would have been within an hour  
18 slot, I believe. And I should say I don't have the schedule in front of me or the notes  
19 from that day, so I'm speaking based on memory.

20 And so from that, we had about an hour for the taping, which would have been in  
21 the Diplomatic Receiving Room, in the Dip Room as it's called. And then from there we  
22 had an event. And then I can't recall what we had for the rest of the day on the  
23 schedule, if anything, on the official schedule.

24 But what was interesting about that taping in particular that I observed was it took  
25 twice as long as it was scheduled for. I -- on the -- if you were to look at the time stamp

1 on my camera, you'll see -- you'll follow through the taping through -- from start to finish.  
2 And in between the finish of the taping, we paused to do the event, and I believe that we  
3 ran late to the event as well. I think we ran about 20 minutes late or so to the event.

4 So the taping --

5 Q Can I stop you there? And we'll just kind of walk through it.

6 So it sounds like the President had on his schedule time to film his remarks that he  
7 ultimately delivered to the country on January the 7th. Is that right?

8 A Correct.

9 Q Okay. And it was originally scheduled to be about an our hour in the  
10 Diplomatic Room?

11 A I believe so.

12 Q All right. Do you remember the event that came after it that you had to go  
13 break for?

14 A I don't actually.

15 Q Okay.

16 A I actually was trying to remember where it was at, what room that it was  
17 held in, if it was held in the West Wing or on the State Floor. I couldn't recall that, so  
18 it's --

19 Q Okay. That's no problem.

20 Who else was in the room while you were doing the taping for the Presidential  
21 remarks on the 7th?

22 A Sure. Based on memory, it would have been the teleprompter person. It  
23 would have been the WHCA, the White House communication office, doing the taping.  
24 It could have been members of the communication team. A valet.

25 And it would have been, of course, a Secret Service agent potentially, or that

1 person might have been -- or people might have been on the outside of the Dip Room.

2 The video team, the audiovisual team that you saw in the Rose Garden the day  
3 before.

4 Q Okay. Do you remember --

5 A I was going to say, the legal team. There was quite a few people in there.

6 Q Yeah.

7 A It was the legal -- there was members of the -- multiple members of the legal  
8 team, and the -- I believe Jared and Ivanka, Dan Scavino, and perhaps one of his members  
9 of the Oval Office team. It could have been Nick Luna or one of the members of the  
10 team.

11 Q Okay. And when you say the legal team, do you remember who from the  
12 legal team was there?

13 A Based off memory, it would have been likely -- oh, and a speechwriter. I'm  
14 not entirely sure which speechwriter would have been in there.

15 Based off of memory, it would have been Scott Gast or Pat Cipollone. And it  
16 could have been one or two other folks.

17 Q Okay. Do you remember Eric Herschmann being there?

18 A Eric could have been there, yes.

19 Q Okay. Not sure a hundred percent? And that's okay.

20 A Throughout the time it was sort of revolving or evolving through. I would  
21 be -- I wouldn't be surprised if he was there. He was in the Oval Office area a lot in the  
22 last -- during his time there. He was there a lot.

23 Q Okay.

24 A So it wouldn't be surprising for him to be in the room.

25 Q Do you remember the Chief of Staff, Mark Meadows, being there?

1 A I don't believe he was.

2 Q Okay.

3 A That wouldn't make sense.

4 Q Why do you say that?

5 A It just didn't -- taping typically didn't -- to have a chief of staff there -- I don't  
6 know -- that's a great question. It doesn't make sense, I guess, because he was fully  
7 staffed.

8 Q Okay.

9 A So it didn't really make sense to have the Chief of Staff there. But that's  
10 just my opinion.

11 Q Okay. No. That sounds good. And based, I assume, on your experience  
12 just working in the West Wing and events that he would go to and certain events he  
13 wouldn't? Is that fair?

14 A Fair. Also based on his schedule or needs, so --

15 Q Okay.

16 Mr. Kaufmann. Could we have just -- could I have a brief moment just to speak  
17 to Ms. Craighead just for a moment?

18 [REDACTED] Yes, of course. Take your time.

19 Mr. Kaufmann. How do we do that in this format?

20 [REDACTED] What I will do is I will go on mute and stop our video. I would  
21 suggest both of you do the same and then maybe have a phone call.

22 Mr. Kaufmann. We'll do that. Thank you.

23 [REDACTED] Sure. And we'll go off the record.

24 [Discussion off the record.]

25 [REDACTED] All right. Then let's go back on the record.

1 We're resuming the transcribed interview of Ms. Shealah Craighead.

2

3 Q And I think where we left off you were describing what you remembered  
4 about people who were in the room when the President filmed his remarks on January  
5 the 7th.

6 So I guess at this point can you walk us through what you remember when you got  
7 to the room, the Diplomatic Room, for the President's taping of the remarks on the 7th?

8 A Sure. I remember the room being very crowded and sort of revolving or  
9 evolving people coming in and out. I remember the taping setup with the video team  
10 and the teleprompter team off to the video camera's right side.

11 And, let's see, you had the setup of the podium against the fireplace. And there  
12 was a table, like a small table, with beverages or whatever was needed on the  
13 right -- water, you know -- on the right side of that. And that -- so that's the general  
14 setup of the room.

15 Q Okay. And before the President came in, were you there?

16 A No. I stayed with him from the Oval to the Diplomatic Room.

17 Q And when you walked in with the President, were there any discussions  
18 going on or any comments about what the President would do or say?

19 A I don't recall.

20 Q Okay.

21 A Oh, excuse me. Not specific that I remember. There were multiple  
22 conversations happening. I don't recall specifically how that was unfolding.

23 He would do a run-through of the remarks before taping, and there was a lot of  
24 input in the room from multiple people. I couldn't be specific, though, on conversations.

25 Q Okay. Before you got to the Diplomatic Room, do you remember any

1 comments that you overheard? Did the President say anything about the remarks that  
2 he wanted to deliver on the 7th?

3 A I don't recall.

4 Q Okay. And then when you get in there, tell us what you do recall about the  
5 tapings or the run-through, I guess, initially and what the President wanted to say or do.

6 A Sure. The taping -- so in my observation, his demeanor was hesitant to say  
7 the words. There were multiple changes to the context in the words, multiple  
8 conversations with he and members in the Dip Room about the words or what he was  
9 comfortable saying or wasn't comfortable saying.

10 And he seemed to be very agitated about the taping. And by agitated, I'll clarify,  
11 it was lots of stops and starts, lots of -- lots of starts and stops.

12 Q Okay.

13 A Asking for something to drink, asking for something -- another  
14 Coca-Cola -- or asking for something. Just sort of -- lots of repeated stops and starts.

15 Q You mentioned that he was hesitant to say certain words. Do you  
16 remember which words or the types of words or phrases the President was hesitant to  
17 deliver?

18 A Not specifically.

19 Q Were there any themes that you remember him not wanting to deliver?

20 A My understanding was that he wanted to -- my observation was that he  
21 wanted to -- the team, I believe, was Pat and Ivanka encouraging his conversation  
22 in specific -- in -- the speech in a specific direction, and he was not comfortable with that.

23 Q Okay.

24 A Specific words, I can't recall. But that was the general -- there was a  
25 lot -- there seemed to be -- there were lots of back and forth on the speech and changes

1 made to it in real time while he was taping.

2 Q Do you remember him having a paper copy of the speech that he was  
3 marking up in this session?

4 A No, I don't recall.

5 Q Okay. I'll represent to you that some of the documents that we've  
6 obtained as part of the investigation show that the President crossed out certain  
7 language -- and I'm paraphrasing here -- but language about prosecuting certain rioters to  
8 the fullest extent of the law.

9 Do you remember anything about that?

10 A No. In the taping he was reading from a teleprompter, so he didn't have  
11 paper in front of him, if I recall properly. But that would -- he wouldn't -- he was reading  
12 specifically from the teleprompter across the room. So that wasn't happening during  
13 the taping.

14 Q And you said he was agitated and there were a lot of stops and starts. Can  
15 you elaborate on that at all? Do you remember him saying or doing anything that would  
16 suggest that agitation?

17 A Sure. Based on previous tapings he has done, he's a spot-on -- he's really  
18 direct and spot-on with his taping. He's typically very one or two takes, call it a day.  
19 He's pretty straightforward on that.

20 So it alerted me that -- the difference on this taping was notable to me because of  
21 the time it took and the multiple stops and starts and the frustration he seemed to be  
22 showing if the -- through -- by stopping and starting multiple times and changing words.

23 Q Okay. And we may have covered this already, but do you recall any specific  
24 remarks or themes that Pat Cipollone, Ivanka, or anybody else in the room were  
25 encouraging him to say?

1 A No, not specifically. It --

2 Q Do you remember -- oh, go ahead. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

3 A No. Go ahead.

4 Q Do you remember any suggestions that the President just -- he had to do this  
5 or he needed to be stronger in his words?

6 A I can give you my observation.

7 Q Okay.

8 A But I can't give you the exact phrases.

9 The observation of Ivanka and Pat were to offer support in the -- of the transition.  
10 And that was not -- that had not been conveyed before.

11 Q Okay. And when you say offer support in the transition, are you talking  
12 about the transition to the new administration, the Biden administration?

13 A Correct.

14 Q Do you remember the issue of the President wanting to say anything about  
15 pardons or pardoning anybody who had been associated with the attack coming up?

16 A I do not.

17 Q Now, you mentioned earlier that originally the taping of the remarks on the  
18 7th had been scheduled for an hour. So is it the case that they were not completed  
19 within that 1-hour time period?

20 A Correct.

21 Q And you went off to the other event, it sounds like, as an interlude and then  
22 came back.

23 Do you remember about how long it took once you got back for the President to  
24 finish taping the remarks on the 7th?

25 A I believe the entire -- I believe it took within an hour. So my -- the first half

1 of the taping that was scheduled was scheduled for about an hour, I believe. Then the  
2 second part of that taping took within an hour. It didn't go much further than that  
3 I -- yeah, an hour.

4 Q And was it your impression that the President was still reluctant or, in your  
5 words, agitated in that second session, the second hour of the taping?

6 A No. The second taping was more fluid and more confident in his, in my  
7 observation, in his delivery.

8 Q Was there anything that changed? I mean, did he talk to anybody in  
9 between the taping sessions or did he talk to somebody once he got back for the second  
10 round of taping that you recall?

11 A I can't recall that specifically.

12 Q All right. Is there anything you noticed that changed between the sessions  
13 other than talking to somebody?

14 A There were changes made to the speech in between that on the  
15 teleprompter they had updated. And so when he came back, he was ready to -- the  
16 teleprompter was ready for him to jump into the speech again.

17 Q Do you know if those were changes that he had made or suggested to the  
18 team?

19 A I don't. I don't.

20 Q Bear with us just one moment.

21 [REDACTED]

22 Q Ms. Craighead, specific to the first go-around, that first hour when the  
23 President was agitated and hesitant, some of the language we've seen in the initial draft  
24 of the speech that was changed included words to the effect of the President saying that  
25 the people who attacked the Capitol did not represent him and did not represent his

1 movement.

2 Do you remember that being one of the things that he was hung up on as he was  
3 trying to deliver those remarks in the first hour; in other words, disassociating the people  
4 who attacked from himself and his supporters?

5 A Not specifically. I don't recall. I don't recall specifically on that.

6 Q And understanding specifics, it's important to be -- I mean, if you don't  
7 remember the particular words. But, I mean, can you just tell us in your own words  
8 what you recall generally about what it was that he was pushing back against saying, just  
9 as a general matter? What was the thrust of it that he had a problem with?

10 A Yes. I can't recall specific words. Generally it was -- he was still not -- the  
11 election was still -- let me start over, please.

12 The atmosphere and the mood, in my observation, based on what I saw, was that  
13 he was still very much against the transition of the next President and administration  
14 coming in. So I understood that to be his general -- what was hard for him to follow  
15 through in his speech on.

16 His agitation to me, in my observation, was that he wasn't able to speak the  
17 words. It was very hard for him to get the words out in that speech.

18 So I am not aware of what happened in between the first taping and the second  
19 taping, but there was change, and he was able to fluently say the words in confident and  
20 move forward in that taping pretty smoothly. The first half was very choppy, very  
21 laborious. I think that -- or, yeah. I'll stop there.

22 Q And understanding he was agitated during that first hour, what was the  
23 demeanor and posture that Ivanka and Mr. Cipollone were taking toward the President  
24 and how they were addressing him? Were they -- how would you describe that?

25 A Very supportive, kind, encouraging of speaking positively to the Nation, of

1 speaking supportively into the transition, of speaking -- of saying in the speech the  
2 peaceful transition should happen. That was the general tone and atmosphere in that  
3 space.

4 Q Understand the words that they wanted conveyed and the theme, but in  
5 terms of their communications with the President about getting him to say this, what was  
6 the -- what was their emotional state? Were they agitated? Were they, you know,  
7 using elevated voices to try to get him to say the words? Or how were they acting  
8 during those back-and-forths?

9 A Sure. No, they were not. Their demeanor is consistently calm. So  
10 elevated voices or demands or, you know, strong words would not be in their character  
11 anyway in general. They were very supportive in their tone and encouragement to  
12 say -- to convey to America to say the words that needed to be said, from their  
13 perspective.

14 But the mood in the room, the observation that I saw was of support to get  
15 through the speech, from the law team, the counsels, and Ivanka as well.

16 [REDACTED]:

17 Q Just a quick follow-up there.

18 Do you remember any conversations about the President wanting to blame  
19 outside groups, other than his supporters, for the attack on the Capitol, like antifa or  
20 anything else?

21 A In that space, I don't.

22 Q In that space -- okay. What about other than during that filming session?

23 A No, I don't recall specifics.

24 Q Okay. Is there anything else that you can remember about that or anything  
25 else on the topics we've covered today that you would like to share?

1           A    No.  No, I'm good.  Thank you.

2           ██████████   Okay.  Well, thank you.  I appreciate it.  I appreciate your time  
3 again and for reconvening today, Ms. Craighead.

4           At this point, unless there's anything you or your counsel have to put on the  
5 record, I'll give you an opportunity to do so.  Looks like you're shaking your head.  
6 Okay.  Very good then.

7           Let's go off the record.

8           [Off-the-record discussion follows.]

9           Ms. Craighead.  I was just going to say my concern is that I don't remember  
10 specifics, but I can tell you the mood.  And my hesitation in that is speculating, and I  
11 don't want to do that.

12           The mood in the room was -- in the whole environment -- was very tense.  The  
13 mood in the whole West Wing was very tense.

14           And it was -- and your question about the conversations about blaming other  
15 people, antifa, that wasn't -- there aren't specifics, because it seemed to be -- and I'm  
16 saying this off the record because it seemed to be very -- he just wasn't accepting of, as  
17 we know, he just wasn't accepting of the elections.

18           And he certainly wasn't accepting of the transition.  So any transition -- anything  
19 that we had to do with transitioning to the new administration, it was almost that you  
20 just didn't talk about it because you would be -- it would seem that you were against the  
21 team.

22           I was mentioning to Adam and Jon that I gave a tour to the incoming director of  
23 the photo department, with management's permission and conversation as protocol  
24 should be.  But I didn't mention to anybody else that I was doing that because it just  
25 wasn't the attitude of the environment, so to speak.

1           There was a hard divide between the President and the Vice President's team, as  
2 you can imagine, after that day. But the mood was that you just sort of let it -- you  
3 didn't engage.

4           Because you didn't -- the amount of trust in that environment was completely  
5 shattered. So you didn't know who to trust or who not to trust. You just did your job  
6 in a way that was professionally handled to -- and not taking anything personally or  
7 emotionally, because it just -- the energy and the environment was just really highly  
8 tense.

9           So you just -- you just didn't know what it -- if you were to say, "I'm proceeding  
10 with the transition," how that would be proceeded -- how that would be received by  
11 anybody in that immediate circle, as maybe you're a traitor, maybe you're not; maybe  
12 you're not on board with our administration, maybe you are.

13           You know, you just didn't know, so you just sort of flew under the radar to get out,  
14 to finish up the last 2 weeks and just depart.

15           So the environment was a very tricky environment to navigate. And I didn't  
16 know -- I don't -- I didn't know how to convey that to you without -- because I don't have  
17 hard facts, and I just didn't want to speculate that on record.

18           ██████████ Yes.

19           Ms. Craighead. It was a really, really toxic and tricky environment to navigate.

20           I do recall Ivanka being very supportive of her dad saying the right words for  
21 America, the supportive words that she -- that needed to happen, the transition, peaceful  
22 transition, you know, in that speech.

23           I believe Pat Cipollone as well was also in that environment, and Eric Herschmann.  
24 But I couldn't -- I can't -- without seeing the photos, I can't replay -- I can't replay exactly  
25 who was in that room, and it was evolving and revolving throughout the entire time.

1 [REDACTED] Yes.

2 Ms. Craighead. His agitation of stopping and starting the conversation was  
3 based on asking for Diet Cokes several times, or stopping to take a sip and then starting  
4 again, immediately stopping and taking another sip and then starting again, reading some  
5 of the scroll, and then asking for a new Coca-Cola, or needing a towel to wipe his head or  
6 something.

7 It was just there is anything -- you know, as you procrastinate, you're finding  
8 anything to do not to do what you have to do. That's what it seemed like in my  
9 observation. Anything that he could procrastinate with before getting the words out he  
10 would do.

11 So that's what I can give you as my observation.

12 People were in and out of the room. Ivanka was very instrumental. I believe  
13 Jared was there as well. I'd have to see the photos. But they were very much by his  
14 side through that entire time.

15 I don't recall the Chief of Staff being in there. And, like I said, because it just  
16 didn't seem like he would -- that would be a place where he goes to -- that didn't seem  
17 like where he would be, because there was -- he was -- the President was overly staffed.  
18 But perhaps he came in and out. Again, I can't recall without seeing the photos.

19 So -- and then WCHA, the White House communication office, they, I believe,  
20 were also taping, as well as the video team.

21 So, you know, all of that would be in the National Archives, as well, on video that  
22 you could see, as well as the still images.

23 [Off-the-record discussion concludes.]

24 [REDACTED] So, yeah, let's go on the record.

25 This is resuming the transcribed interview of Ms. Shealah Craighead.

1           And for the record, after we went off there was a brief conversation that we had  
2 with Ms. Craighead, and she recounted certain events from January the 7th as well as in  
3 the general post-election and post-January 6th period.

4           And so, Ms. Craighead, we'd ask your permission to include that which was  
5 recorded by the Webex platform into the official record of today's proceedings.

6           Ms. Craighead. Yes, I approve that.

7           ██████████ Okay. Thank you so much.

8           And then we'll work with the official reporter and ask that the official reporters  
9 include that period and that conversation, your comments into the record.

10          Very good. And with that, I think we can go off the record.

11          [Whereupon, at 10:55 a.m., the interview was concluded.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing \_\_\_\_ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

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Witness Name

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Date