The Official Words of the President

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Early in his administration the White House stated clearly and unequivocally that Donald Trump’s tweets constitute the official word of the president of the United States. As a scholar of presidential rhetoric it seems obvious that, just like a formal speech where ghostwriters play a key role, ultimately it doesn’t matter who helps craft President Trump’s tweets; once written the words are his, he owns them and they are a permanent part of the public record. Therefore, regardless of the fact that Mr. Trump’s outside attorney, John Dowd, now takes responsibility, it was the president who on Friday declared that he fired Michael Flynn because he lied to the vice president and the FBI.

Intent was communicated and hence a prima facie case for obstruction of justice mounts. For the White House, in view of this new tweet, to claim that Mr. Trump can’t be charged with obstruction of justice is at best laughable. The rule of law will — as it always has — prevail.

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