

Trump lashes out as presidency hits six-month mark



US President Donald Trump greets members of the US military alongside Vice President Mike Pence (L) following a meeting at the Pentagon in Washington

Washington

Donald Trump hit the six-month point of his turbulent presidency yesterday in combative style -- lashing out at his own attorney general over the probe into Russia's alleged election meddling that has dogged him from day one.

Since taking office on January 20, Trump has been on a roller coaster ride, and the gut-wrenching twists and turns looked set to continue after Jeff Sessions vowed to stay on at the Justice Department despite a stinging public rebuke from the commander-in-chief.

Publicly abandoning an influential early supporter, the 71-year-old Trump suggested Sessions had betrayed him in stepping back from investigations into alleged Kremlin-Trump collusion -- and said he wished he had never hired him.

"How do you take a job

and then recuse yourself? If he would have recused himself before the job, I would have said, 'Thanks, Jeff, but I'm not going to take you,'" Trump said.

"I think is very unfair to the president," Trump said. "It's extremely unfair, and that's a mild word, to the president."

Yesterday, Sessions said he had no plans to resign in the wake of the blistering criticism.

"I have the honour of serving as attorney general. It is something that goes beyond any thought I would have ever had for myself," the Republican former senator said.

"I plan to continue to do so as long as that is appropriate," he added.

When asked how he could continue to work without the confidence of Trump, Sessions replied: "We are serving right now. The work we are doing

today is the kind of work we intend to continue."

'Brutal process'

Trump's expansive remarks to The New York Times painted a picture of a president preoccupied by allegations against him -- chief among them that his team may have colluded with Moscow to help tilt the election in his favour.

In the interview, he warned special counsel and former FBI director Robert Mueller that some Trump family finances should be off-limits to his wide-ranging investigation.

Asked if Mueller looking at finances unrelated to Russia would be a red line, Trump responded, "I would say yes."

"I have no income from Russia. I don't do business with Russia," he added.

Trump's first six months in the White House have been as chaotic and contentious as any

How do you take a job and then recuse yourself? I think is very unfair to the president, says Donald Trump

for a new president in living memory.

Making good on a promise to shake up Washington, the Republican billionaire-turned-world leader has shattered norms at every turn, abandoning the usual presidential decorum and caution.

But his bold and unambiguous campaign promises remain unrealized, as he has struggled to turn word into legislative deed, most notably in enacting health care reform.

"It is tough. It's a very narrow path, winding this way. You think you have it, and then you lose four on the other

side because you gave. It is a brutal process," he said.

"Smart people, tough people -- couldn't get it done."

The White House yesterday lauded Trump's success in nominating a Supreme Court justice -- conservative Neil Gorsuch -- and overseeing a growing economy.

"President Trump's impact on the economy has been immediate, spurring job creation across the country," the White House claimed.

"Just six months in office, President Trump has taken historic action to eliminate wasteful and costly regulations that have stood in the way of hardworking Americans."

IS falling 'very fast': Trump at Pentagon

Washington

The Islamic State group is falling "very fast," US President Donald Trump said yesterday as he visited the Pentagon for a military strategy meeting.

"We're doing very well against ISIS. ISIS is falling fast, very fast," Trump said, using another acronym for IS.

Trump's comments come at the six-month mark of his presidency, for which he campaigned by vowing to quickly defeat IS.

While the strategy to beat the jihadists in Iraq and Syria follows largely that of the Obama administration, Trump has given battlefield commanders more power to call in strikes and make real-time decisions.

IS has suffered a string of setbacks over the past two years, including the loss of their Iraq bastion Mosul earlier this month.

The intense destruction of the city and ongoing operations to retake Raqa in Syria have led critics to say the Trump administration is paying less attention to protecting civilians.

Trump signed an executive order soon after taking office giving his generals 30 days to come up with a revised plan to wipe the jihadists out.

The review resulted in an "annihilation campaign" against IS, but details are still being discussed and it has been broadened into a wider regional strategy.

Trump's brief comments actually came after he was asked whether he would be sending troops to Afghanistan, where the US has been since late 2001.

"We'll see," he said.

Pentagon officials have said Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is considering adding around 4,000 troops to augment the current "train and advise" mission for local forces.

Also attending Thursday's meeting at the Pentagon were Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and General Joe Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.