

Morning Mix

Billy Bush says there were 8 witnesses to Trump's 'Access Hollywood' comments

By **Derek Hawkins** December 4

Billy Bush, the former “Access Hollywood” host, has responded to recent reports that President Trump has questioned the authenticity of video in which he can be heard bragging about grabbing women by their genitalia, saying the president was “indulging in some revisionist history.” Bush said that seven people, in addition to him, heard Trump.

In a commentary Sunday for the New York Times, Bush said he was disturbed by reports from the past week that Trump has told allies and at least one senator that he may not be the voice on the 2005 “Access Hollywood” tape.

“He said it,” Bush wrote, referring to Trump’s now infamous “grab them by the p---y” remark made on an “Access Hollywood” bus.

“Of course he said it,” Bush added. “And we laughed along, without a single doubt that this was hypothetical hot air from America’s highest-rated bloviator. Along with Donald Trump and me, there were seven other guys present on the bus at the time, and every single one of us assumed we were listening to a crass standup act. He was performing. Surely we thought, none of this was real.”

“We now know better,” he added, referring to the women who came forward to accuse Trump of improper sexual advances.

The Washington Post first reported the leaked recording in October 2016. It captured audio of then-candidate Trump boasting to Bush about forcibly kissing, groping and trying to have sex with women as the two rode to a soap opera set to shoot a segment. Bush, who hosted “Access Hollywood” at the time, laughed and egged Trump on.

After the recording surfaced, Trump acknowledged it was him speaking and dismissed his words as “locker-room banter.”

“I said it, I was wrong, and I apologize,” he said.

But last week, the Times and The Post reported that Trump was raising doubt about the recording’s authenticity, telling people close to him, including a Republican senator, that the tape may have been doctored or faked. He has suggested to senior

advisers that the voice isn't his, or that it was edited to make him look bad, and has asked others whether they think it sounds like him, as The Post has reported.

Responding to the reports, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump "hasn't changed his position" on the recording.

Bush, who was fired from NBC's "Today" shortly after the tape emerged, has tried to restore his reputation in recent months by publicly atoning for his role in the scandal. He is scheduled to appear on "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" on Monday night.

In May, the Hollywood Reporter published an extensive interview with Bush, in which he described his shame and humiliation about the recording, saying he didn't have the "strength of character" to shut Trump down. He vowed to support women in the future and lamented the fact that he had lost his job over the tape while Trump was elected president ("the irony is glaring," he said).

In his commentary Sunday, Bush said he believed some of the women who have publicly accused Trump of forcibly kissing and groping them in encounters over the past two and a half decades, saying their accounts line up with Trump's comments on the bus. Trump's apparent questioning of the "Access Hollywood" tape has "hit a raw nerve in me," Bush wrote.

"President Trump is currently indulging in some revisionist history," he wrote. "I can only imagine how it has reopened the wounds of the women who came forward with their stories about him, and did not receive enough attention."

Trump has denied wrongdoing, either rejecting the women's claims himself or through spokesmen. "Nobody has more respect for women than I do," he said last year after the "Access Hollywood" tape was released.

Bush went on to assert that he had been critical of a Trump presidency from the early days of the campaign. He portrayed the allegations against the president as part of a broader debate about sexual assault and pledged his "respect and admiration" to the women who have come forward.

"To these women: I will never know the fear you felt or the frustration of being summarily dismissed and called a liar, but I do know a lot about the anguish of being inexorably linked to Donald Trump," Bush wrote. "You are the culture warriors at the forefront of necessary change."

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