

*CBS Mornings*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; James Comey Indicted by Federal Grand Jury]

TONY DOKOUPIL: We're going to begin with the news this hour. The indictment of former FBI director James Comey He's charged with one count of making false statements and one count of obstruction of justice for his Senate testimony back in September of 2020 about Russian election interference. The charges followed President Trump urging his attorney general to go after Comey calling him, "guilty as hell." Comey says he's innocent and Democrats say the charges are phony and based only on the Trump — Donald Trump's desire for revenge. They called it an abuse of power. To put it in historical context we're joined by presidential historian, one of my favorites, Douglas Brinkley. Professor, thank you very much for being here. I often turn to history for some degree of comfort knowing the past is crazy and chaotic but this feels special. Can you put these events in context for us?

DOUGLAS BRINKLEY: Well, this is crazier than things that have happened in the past. What is true is that Andrew Jackson also was somebody who wanted vengeance on his opponents. He thought he won an election in 1824, but a corrupt bargain, as it was called, was made between Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams, and alas, he lost in 1824. But when Jackson got into power in 1828, he tried to rid Washington of any fingerprint or remaining hair of Henry Clay. He did away with the idea of a national bank, fired anybody that was with Clay or that was with Adam wanted to purge Washington in what he thought were his political opponents. He did it in a begrudging way. Then you cut to more modern times, the 20th century, with what Richard Nixon built an inner White House circle, a President's club, that tried to circumvent the Justice Department, the FBI, State Department, CIA, you name it, and they tried to create a little cabal out of the White House. This led to many of Nixon's closest associates, like Holdman and Colson and others, going to prison. And so now, we're cut to Trump and seeing it is bold move to try to issue and predetermine indictments of James Comey

DOKOUPIL: You call it bold and today is crazier than the past. How is it different?

BRINKLEY: Because we now have a president of the United States that has an authoritarian bent like we've never seen before and that he feels that retribution is his job in his second term. He has already determined the crimes and says find me the crimes, I want to go after this person. Here's my enemy's list. Now, dig, find something. Blame something on them. Nixon used to have a list of people that — enemies and he would have the IRS look into their taxes make their audits hard, but this is now making a former FBI director walk in and, you know, register in for his upcoming hearing unless this gets dismissed, which it might, and it just shows that Donald Trump is desperate to feed red meat to his base. It's not been a good half a year for him. The MAGA crowd loyalists are angry at the Epstein files. He gloated about Jimmy Kimmel kind of getting his scalp so to speak and then Kimmel is back on the airwaves and with Comey's — you know, only had a few days where this was going to be able to make these charges before the

statute of limitations in kicked. You see the President going right after Comey —

ADRIANA DIAZ: But professor — right.

BRINKLEY: — in a very tough way.

DIAZ: Douglas, quickly, what is the takeaway? Is this a new precedent?

BRINKLEY: I hope not. I hope it's not a new precedent. We won't have a Justice Department if it is because top lawyers aren't going to want to work there. Already people in the Justice Department careerists are looking to leave. Why would you want to have a boss to tell you to make things up or behave in this sort of unsavory, unconstitutional way just to serve the whims of the President? I mean, we have a situation where Donald Trump thinks he owns the Justice Department. The Justice Department is owned by the people of America.

DIAZ: Right. Douglas Brinkley, thank you so much.