

Trump-Russia probe to face challenge in Justice Department | Business Insider

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A high-level official at the Department of Justice tasked with investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 election has announced that she will leave the DOJ in May, leaving a key position in the department's National Security Division unfilled as President Donald Trump's political appointees await confirmation in the Senate. Mary McCord, the acting assistant attorney general of the division, did not provide a reason when she told her staff that she would be leaving in May, according to NPR. She said "the time is now right for me to pursue new career opportunities." McCord's departure has raised questions about the future of the Trump-Russia probe, which will be in the hands of Trump's deputy attorney general nominee, Rod Rosenstein, if and when he is confirmed. Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from Trump campaign-related investigations last month amid revelations that he failed to disclose two meetings he had with Russia's ambassador to the US, Sergey Kislyak, in 2016.

"This just highlights how important it is that the Russia investigation be handled by an independent prosecutor," said Matt Miller, a former DOJ spokesman under the Obama administration. "Once Rod Rosenstein is confirmed, the investigation will be in the hands of someone who interacts with people in the White House on a daily basis, and that's just not tenable. It's even harder with the career official who has been handling it leaving the department."

When asked during his confirmation hearing last month if he would select a special prosecutor to oversee the Russia probe, Rosenstein replied that he was "not in a position to answer."

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