

Idiom by Lon Yan

欲蓋彌彰

yu4 gai4 mi2 zhang1

US president Donald Trump fired FBI director James Comey. The media accused him of interfering with investigation into his administration's alleged improper dealings with Russia.

Trump, of course, denied impropriety, saying that he has never asked Comey to shut down the investigation.

And instead of deflecting attention from the issue, his move just made the media more eager to dig up more related stories. A subsequent Washington Post report, for example, said Trump has disclosed highly classified information to a Russian top official during a recent meeting.

Regarding the latest accusation, Trump defended that the information was supplied to Russia to help it fight terrorism. Well, that may be so, but this could also be a case of “欲蓋彌彰” (yu4 gai4 mi2 zhang1).

“欲” (yu4) means “to desire,” “to want,” “to long for,” “蓋” (gai4) “to cover,” “to cover up,” “彌” (mi2) “more”, and “彰” (zhang1) “clear,” “evident,” “conspicuous,” “obvious.”

Literally, “欲蓋彌彰” (yu4 gai4 mi2 zhang1) is “wanting to hide it makes it more conspicuous.” It means “the more one tries to cover up, the better-known it will become,” “a cover up only makes matters worse.”

Many politicians have try to cover up major mistakes and ended up “欲蓋彌彰” (yu4 gai4 mi2 zhang1). Apart from Trump, famous examples included Richard Nixon’s “Watergate” and Bill Clinton’s “Lewinskygate.”

Politicians are often targets of investigations. Those who know the idiom “欲蓋彌彰” (yu4 gai4 mi2 zhang1) would know to refrain from interfering when he or she is unfortunate enough to become the subject of a probe.

Terms containing the character “蓋” (gai4) include:

蓋子 (gai4 zi) – a cover; a lid; a top

蓋章 (gai4 zhang1) – to affix one’s seal; to stamp

蓋世 (gai4 shi4) – unparalleled; matchless

樽蓋 (zun1 gai4) – a bottle cap