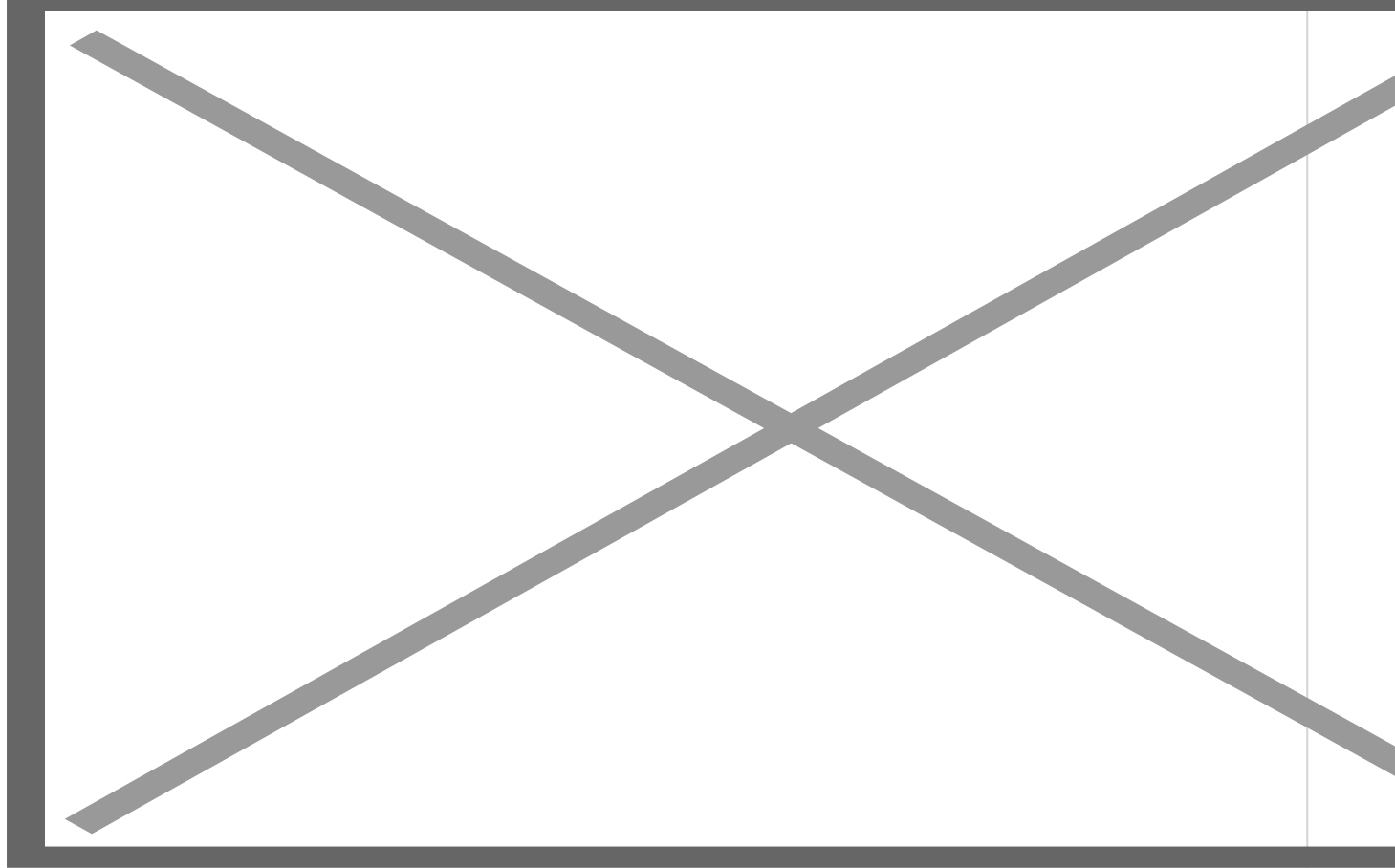


Donald Trump refuses to answer questions in probe into his company

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Former U.S. President Donald Trump leaves Trump Tower to meet with New York Attorney General Letitia James for a civil investigation on August 10, 2022, in New York City. (Photo by Getty Images)

New York, August 11 (RHC)-- Former U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he refused to answer questions under oath during an appearance before the New York state attorney general in an investigation into his business dealings.

Trump had appeared at state Attorney General Letitia James's offices on Wednesday morning to testify in a long-running civil probe of the Trump Organization's finances. "I declined to answer the questions under the rights and privileges afforded to every citizen under the United States Constitution," Trump said in a statement.

The Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution grants the right to remain silent when questioned by authorities to protect against self-incrimination.

Trump's deposition in New York came less than two days after FBI agents searched his home in Florida as part of a separate investigation looking into possible mishandling of classified documents by the former president, according to several US media outlets.

The New York attorney general launched the civil investigation in 2019 after Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen testified in Congress that the ex-president exaggerated his assets "when it served his purposes."

James has said in court filings that her office has uncovered "significant" evidence that Trump's company "used fraudulent or misleading asset valuations to obtain a host of economic benefits, including loans, insurance coverage and tax deductions."

Donald Trump, who previously suggested that he will run for president again in 2024, has dismissed the New York inquiry, federal probe and the congressional committee investigating the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by his supporters as politically motivated.

On Wednesday, he reiterated that he did "nothing wrong," stressing -- without evidence -- that federal authorities, state prosecutors and what he called the "fake news media" are targeting him with unfounded accusations.

"If there was any question in my mind, the raid of my home, Mar-a-Lago, on Monday by the FBI, just two days prior to this deposition, wiped out any uncertainty," Trump said.

"I have absolutely no choice because the current administration and many prosecutors in this Country have lost all moral and ethical bounds of decency."

Many Republicans have blamed President Joe Biden for the FBI search, but the White House has insisted that it does not interfere in Department of Justice-led investigations. Trump singled out New York's James with his criticism on Wednesday, calling her a "failed politician" and accusing her of pursuing a "vendetta" against him.

Trump was impeached twice as president, including in early 2021 for inciting a riot at the US Capitol as legislators were certifying Biden's election victory, but he was acquitted by the Senate in votes along party lines.

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