**Obama Rebukes Trump for 'Rigged' Election Claims**

U.S. President Barack Obama rebuked Donald Trump Tuesday for claiming that the presidential election is rigged against him, saying the Republican contender ought to “stop whining” and instead persuade voters to choose him on November 8.

“I have never seen in my lifetime or in modern political history any presidential candidate trying to discredit the elections and the election process before votes have even taken place,” Obama said at a White House news conference, with the visiting prime minister of Italy standing beside him. “It’s unprecedented. It happens to be based on no facts.”

As he has fallen behind in national polls against Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, Trump in recent days has questioned the legitimacy of the election.

The real estate tycoon, making his first run for elected office, has contended that vote fraud is occurring as some states conduct early voting, without presenting any evidence.

Trump claims there will be further problems on Election Day, and that the nationwide balloting is “rigged”; he further claims that national news media are conspiring together with former Secretary of State Clinton to ensure she becomes the country’s first female president.

**​Blunt advice for Trump**

“I’d advise Mr. Trump to stop whining and go try to make his case to get votes,” Obama said. “And if he got the most votes, it would be my expectation of Hillary Clinton to offer a gracious concession speech and pledge to work with him in order to make sure that the American people benefit from an effective government.

“And it would be my job to welcome Mr. Trump, regardless of what he’s said about me, or my differences with him or my opinions, and escort him over to the Capitol [on inauguration day in January] in which there would be a peaceful transfer of power,” the president added. “That’s what Americans do.”

Obama, who has been in office for two full terms, will turn over the White House to his elected successor just more than 10 weeks after the election, according to longstanding tradition and practice.

“There is no serious person out there who would suggest somehow that you could even rig America’s elections,” the president said, “in part because they’re so decentralized and the numbers of votes involved. There’s no evidence that that has happened in the past or that there are instances in which that will happen this time.”

**‘You don’t have what it takes’**

Speaking as if he were addressing Trump, Obama said in the White House Rose Garden: “You start whining before the game’s even over. If whenever things are going badly for you and you lose, you start to blame somebody else, then you don’t have what it takes to be in this job.”

There is scant evidence of vote fraud in United States elections, with one study saying there were only 31 instances of voter impersonation from 2000 to 2014, a period in which 1 billion votes were cast in a long list of elections.

Obama, a staunch Clinton supporter, also criticized Trump’s praise for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Obama said Trump’s “flattery” of the Russian leader is “unprecedented in American politics.” The president said he is surprised that Republican leaders are going along with Trump’s pro-Putin views, calling this a real “role reversal” for Republicans.

Trump has said he views a better U.S. relationship with Russia as an opportunity for the two countries to fight as partners against the Islamic State terrorist group. He suggested this week that, if he is elected, he might visit Moscow even before assuming the presidency.

**Italy, US are ‘strong partners’**

Obama delivered his remarks about Trump in response to reporters’ questions at a joint news conference with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Both leaders stressed how much they value the strong partnership between their two countries, cooperating to fight the Islamic State terrorist group in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.

Renzi said history would be kind to Obama, because he has made changes to improve lives and to help poor people.

Obama thanked Renzi and the Italian people for their generosity in saving the lives of so many refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea and pledged U.S. assistance in dealing with that crisis.

Obama and first lady Michelle Obama will host Prime Minister Renzi and Mrs. Agnese Landini at their final state dinner at the White House Tuesday evening.