The president's recollection of the incident contr

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President Donald Trump continued to assert that his former defense secretary was fired rather than voluntarily resigning, a claim that was refuted by a recent White House tell-all written by an award-winning Washington Post journalist.

Speaking to an audience at an ABC News townhall on Tuesday, Trump criticized Jim Mattis, a retired four-star Marine Corps general, as one of the many "disgruntled former employees" who left his administration under adverse circumstances.

"Highly overrated general, didn't do the job, " Trump said of the highly-revered retired officer.

Mattis announced his resignation in December 2018, citing disagreements with the president's decision to withdraw US troops from Syria. The withdrawal, which Mattis strongly opposed, would abandon US allies in the region and conflict with what Mattis believed to be the lodestar in America's strength.

"Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours on these and other subjects, I believe it is right for me to step down from my position, " Mattis wrote in his resignation letter to Trump.

But during the townhall on Tuesday, Trump claimed: "he didn't resign. "

"Give me a letter. No more. Give me a letter, " Trump recalled himself as saying. "I said, 'Jim, give me a letter. It's time for you to move on. '"

"He gave me a letter, but I fired him, " Trump added. "That's called, 'I fired him. ' Now, Gen. Mattis didn't do the job. I wasn't happy with him. ".

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