

Sessions didn't disclose meetings with Russian officials on security clearance form

By **Sari Horwitz** May 24

Attorney General Jeff Sessions did not reveal meetings with Russian officials when he applied for his security clearance to serve as the nation's highest-ranking law enforcement official.

Sessions came under fire earlier this year for not disclosing to the Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearing that, as the senator from Alabama, he met twice with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak during the presidential election when he was also serving as an adviser to the president. In March, Sessions recused himself from investigations related to the 2016 presidential campaign after The Washington Post reported the two meetings.

That same information was omitted from Sessions's security clearance form, which is known as an SF-86, as first reported Wednesday night by CNN.

"As a United States senator, the attorney general met hundreds — if not thousands — of foreign dignitaries and their staff," said Justice Department spokesman Ian Prior. "In filling out the SF-86 form, the Attorney General's staff consulted with those familiar with the process, as well as the FBI investigator handling the background check, and was instructed not to list meetings with foreign dignitaries and their staff connected with his Senate activities."

An FBI spokesman declined to comment.

The security clearance form requires anyone applying for a security clearance to list "any contact" that he or his family had with a foreign government or its representatives over the past seven years.

A Justice official said that in July, a Sessions staffer was helping Sessions fill out the security clearance form because he was being vetted for a possible position in the Trump administration if Trump won the presidency. The staffer asked an FBI

employee handling the vetting if he needed to list seven years of contacts that Sessions had with foreign dignitaries and their staff, and he was told no, the Justice official said.

In late November, after the election, the Sessions staffer helped Sessions fill out a new security clearance form, but did not ask the FBI the same question again — and did not list all the contacts.

Another Sessions staffer who went to work at the Justice Department was also told by an FBI investigator that he did not have to list the many meetings with foreign dignitaries and their staffs if it was related to Senate business, the Justice official said.

After Sessions recused himself from the Russia investigation, Sessions sent out a list of all the ambassadors he met with in 2016. He also amended his Senate testimony and said he spoke briefly with Kislyak during the Republican National Convention in July 2016. He said he also spoke with Kislyak in September during a meeting in his Senate office, which included two senior Sessions staffers.

At the March 2 press conference where he announced his recusal, Sessions said he talked to Kislyak about a trip he made to Russia in 1991, terrorism and Ukraine. The attorney general said that it “got to be a little bit of a testy conversation.” The ambassador invited him to lunch, Sessions said, but he did not accept.

When Sessions recused himself, Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein was tasked with overseeing the FBI probe. But last week, after calls from lawmakers for a special counsel, Rosenstein appointed former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III to take over the investigation as special counsel.

Sari Horwitz covers the Justice Department and criminal justice issues nationwide for The Washington Post, where she has been a reporter for 30 years. [!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b_img.jpg\) Follow @sarihorwitz](#)

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