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POLITICS

2016 Under Scrutiny: A Timeline Of Russia Connections

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October 31, 2017 · 5:00 AM ET



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Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort (right), leaves U.S. District Court after pleading not guilty to federal charges, including "conspiracy against the United States," on Monday in Washington, D.C.

Win McNamee/Getty Images

The first charges have been filed in the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. election, and the court documents help make clearer the timeline of Russia-related events that took place during the presidential campaign.

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, indicted on 12 counts unrelated to his work on the campaign, is the big name. But the guilty plea of an obscure foreign policy adviser named George Papadopoulos has proven more revealing when it comes to alleged connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. Court documents filed Monday add new information to a timeline of events that now involves multiple known contacts between people associated with the Trump campaign and Russian actors.

The order and nature of events during the spring and summer of 2016 became increasingly relevant in June, with revelations about a meeting between Russian nationals, Donald Trump Jr., then-campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.



NATIONAL SECURITY

Russia Tried To Infiltrate Trump Campaign, Mueller Documents Confirm

Here's a timeline of key Russia-related 2016 events:

2006-2016: According to a 12-count indictment unsealed on Oct. 30, 2017, "from approximately 2006 through at least 2016, Manafort and Gates laundered money through scores of United States and foreign corporations, partnerships and bank accounts." Paul Manafort served on the Trump campaign from March 2016 through August 2016, serving as campaign chairman from May until August. Richard Gates is a former business partner of Manafort's who followed him to the Trump campaign as his deputy. After Manafort was ousted from the campaign, Gates moved to the Republican National Committee to work out legal agreements with Trump's campaign and ultimately served on Trump's inaugural committee.

POLITICS

Timeline Of Trump And Russia In Mid-2016: A Series Of Coincidences Or Something More?



"Early March" 2016: According to Justice Department documents, George Papadopoulos learns he will be a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign.

March 14, 2016: Papadopoulos, while traveling in Italy, meets a London-based professor. Per a special counsel filing, "initially, the professor seemed uninterested" in him. "However, after defendant Papadopoulos informed the professor about joining the campaign, the professor appeared to take great interest" in him. The professor had "claimed to have substantial connections with Russian government officials," which according to the filing, Papadopoulos thought would help his standing as a foreign policy adviser for the campaign. (*Editor's note: Many of the dates pertaining to Papadopoulos are described as "on or about" that date in the legal documents. We have omitted that caveat for clarity. See the original Justice Department language here.*)

NPR POLITICS PODCAST

Reconstructing The 2016 Campaign After Trump Jr.'s Russia Meeting

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March 19, 2016: Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta reportedly receives a phishing email, which led to the theft of thousands of his emails going back years, including embarrassing campaign correspondence. Those emails were then posted by Wikileaks in batches beginning in early October and continuing right through the election. The US intelligence community concluded Russia's intelligence agency, the GRU, was responsible for the hacking.

March 21, 2016: Trump cites Papadopoulos as a foreign policy adviser in Washington Post editorial board meeting. Carter Page is also mentioned. Trump told the *Post*:

"Well, I hadn't thought of doing it, but if you want I can give you some of the names... Walid Phares, who you probably know, PhD, adviser to the House of Representatives caucus, and counter-terrorism expert; Carter Page, PhD; George Papadopoulos, he's an energy and oil consultant, excellent guy; the Honorable Joe Schmitz, [former] inspector general at the Department of Defense; [retired] Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg; and I have quite a few more. But that's a group of some of the people that we are dealing with. We have many other people in different aspects of what we do, but that's a representative group."

March 24, 2016: Papadopoulos meets in London with the professor, who brought with him a female Russian national introduced to him "as a relative of Russian President Vladimir Putin with connections to senior Russian government officials." Papadopoulos then emails a "campaign supervisor" not named in court filings as well as "several members of the Campaign's foreign policy team," recounting his meeting with the professor, the woman whom Papadopoulos described as Putin's niece (the filings note he later learned she was not actually related to Putin). Papadopoulos said the topic of the discussion was "to arrange a meeting between us and the Russian leadership to discuss US-Russian ties under President Trump."

March 28, 2016: Trump brings on Manafort to manage delegate operations for the campaign.

March 31: According to court filings, Papadopoulos attended a "national security meeting" in Washington, D.C., with then-candidate Trump and other foreign policy advisers for the campaign. Per the filings, when Papadopoulos introduced himself to the group, he said he had connections that could help arrange a meeting between Trump and President Putin.

**realdonaldtrump**

Trump International Hotel Washington, D.c

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MARCH 31, 2016

April 18, 2016: Around this day, Papadopoulos is introduced by email to a person in Moscow who was said to have connections to the Russian Foreign Ministry. According to court filings, Papadopoulos and this individual have multiple conversations over Skype and email about "setting 'the groundwork' for a 'potential' meeting" between the campaign and Russian officials.

April 25, 2016: Papadopoulos emails an unnamed senior policy adviser to the campaign, saying, "The Russian government has an open invitation by Putin for Mr.

Trump to met when he is ready []. The advantage of being in London is that these governments tend to speak a bit more openly in 'neutral' cities."

April 26, 2016: Papadopoulos meets with the professor in London. The professor tells Papadopoulos that he had just returned from a trip to Moscow, where he met with high-level government officials and learned that the Russians had obtained "dirt" on Hillary Clinton. "They have thousands of emails," the professor said, according to Papadopoulos' statements to the FBI.

April 27, 2016: In a major foreign policy speech at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., Trump indicates a willingness to work with Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I believe an easing of tensions, and improved relations with Russia from a position of strength only, is possible, absolutely possible," he said. "Common sense says this cycle, this horrible cycle of hostility must end and ideally will end soon. Good for both countries. Some say the Russians won't be reasonable. I intend to find out."

Sergey Kislyak, then the Russian ambassador to the U.S., was sitting in the front row, according to a report by Radio Free Europe.

On this same day, Papadopoulos separately emails a "senior policy advisor" and a "high-ranking" campaign official, both unnamed in legal filings. He told the adviser he had "some interesting messages coming in from Moscow about a trip when the time is right." He told the campaign official that he had been receiving "a lot of calls" about Putin wanting to host Trump and his team.

May 18, 2016: James Clapper, then the director of national intelligence, warns of some indications of cyberattacks against the 2016 presidential election. In a cyber-event at the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, D.C., Clapper said "as the campaigns intensify we'll probably have more of it."

June 2, 2016: In early June, as the primaries in both parties were winding down, Clinton turned her fire to Trump in what was widely considered one of the strongest moments of her campaign.

"Now I will leave it to psychiatrists to explain his affection for tyrants," Clinton said in San Diego, Calif. "I just wonder how anyone could be so wrong about who America's real friends are. Because it matters. If you don't know exactly who you're dealing with, men like Putin will eat your lunch."

June 3, 2016: Music promoter Rob Goldstone emails Trump Jr. about setting up a meeting with a Russian government-connected lawyer, among other people, to discuss incriminating information about Clinton. Goldstone works with Emin Agalarov, the son of Russian billionaire developer Aras Agalarov. The Agalarovs already knew the future American president through connections established when Trump Sr. held the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow in 2013.

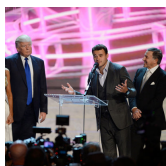


POLITICS

At The 2013 Miss Universe Contest, Trump Met Some Of Russia's Rich And Powerful

"The Crown prosecutor of Russia met with his father Aras this morning and in their meeting offered to provide the Trump campaign with some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia and would be very useful to your father," Goldstone wrote to Trump Jr. "This is obviously very high level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump..."

Trump Jr. was traveling at the time, but it took him just 20 minutes to reply: "if it's what you say, I love it, especially later in the summer."

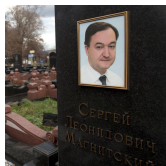


POLITICS

Timeline of Events: The 2013 Miss Universe Pageant

June 7, 2016: The 2016 primary season essentially concludes with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as their parties' presumptive nominees. At his primary night victory speech, Trump previews an upcoming attack in the form of a "major speech" he says he's planning to give in the next few days.

"I am going to give a major speech on, probably Monday of next week, and we are going to be discussing all of the things that have taken place with the Clintons," Trump said. "I think you are going to find it very informative and very, very interesting."



POLITICS

What Really Irritates Vladimir Putin? The Magnitsky Act

Just hours before, Rob Goldstone had finalized plans for the meeting between Trump Jr., Natalia Veselnitskaya and others.

June 9, 2016: Donald Trump Jr., Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, then-Trump campaign chair Paul Manafort, meet in Trump Tower with Veselnitskaya, Russian-American lobbyist Rinat Akhmetshin and another Russian-American present to represent the interests of the Agalarovs.

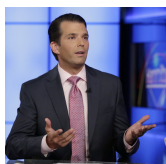
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Russian-American With 'Colorful' Past Attended 2016 Trump Tower Meeting

While the meeting was represented to include damaging information about Hillary Clinton, it instead focused on the Magnitsky Act.

"I never had any damaging or sensitive information about Hillary Clinton. It was never my intention to have that," Veselnitskaya told MSNBC.

Donald Trump Jr. later told Fox News' Sean Hannity that the meeting was "literally just a wasted 20 minutes, which was a shame."



POLITICS

Trump Jr. Says 'In Retrospect' He Would Have Handled Russia Meeting Differently

That afternoon, Donald Trump tweets for the first time about Hillary Clinton's emails.

**Donald J. Trump**

@realDonaldTrump

How long did it take your staff of 823 people to think that up--and where are your 33,000 emails that you deleted?

twitter.com/hillaryclinton...

4:40 PM - Jun 9, 2016

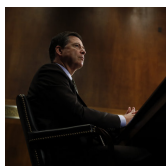
15,774

159,303

284,259

June 14, 2016: News breaks of two separate Russian breaches into the Democratic National Committee's computer network. The hacks were perpetrated by Russian groups that have become known as Cozy Bear and Fancy Bear, identified by Washington, D.C., computer security company CrowdStrike. The hackers had been monitoring the DNC's computer network for a year.

June 22, 2016: In a speech in New York, Trump speculates that foreign adversaries may have hacked Clinton's emails.



POLITICS

The James Comey Saga, In Timeline Form

"So they probably now have a blackmail file over someone who wants to be president of the United States," he said. "This fact alone disqualifies her from the presidency."

July 5, 2016: FBI Director James Comey recommends no charges against Clinton for her handling of classified emails while she was secretary of state. Comey did, however, raise questions about her judgment, and described Clinton and her staff as being "extremely careless." On July 2, Clinton told investigators her use of the private server was for convenience, not to avoid proper record-keeping.

July 7, 2016: Carter Page, a Trump campaign adviser, gives a Russia-friendly speech in Moscow. This leads FBI investigators to obtain a secret warrant to monitor Page's communications.

July 18, 2016: Just before the Republican National Convention, the Trump campaign worked behind the scenes to change the GOP's platform on Ukraine. The

campaign announced that they would not call for the U.S. to give weapons to the Ukraine to fight Russian and rebel forces.

July 21, 2016: The GOP convention concludes with Trump giving an ominous speech accepting the Republican nomination. Trump spoke about the country's struggles with terrorism, crime and immigration, and vows to put "America first."

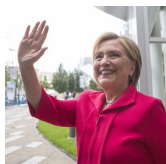
"This is the legacy of Hillary Clinton: death, destruction, terrorism and weakness," he said.

July 22, 2016: WikiLeaks publishes a first batch of almost 20,000 DNC emails, many of them discussing how to undermine Sen. Bernie Sander's campaign. WikiLeaks officials stated that the emails come from the accounts of "seven key figures in the DNC."

The timing here is important, as the emails are published less than a week before the start of the Democratic National Convention, when candidates typically receive a polling boost.

July 23, 2016: Trump continues pushing his theory of a "rigged" election process, in a tweet about the newly released emails.

"Leaked e-mails of DNC show plans to destroy Bernie Sanders," he says. "Mock his heritage and much more. On-line from Wikileaks, really vicious. RIGGED"



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July 24, 2016: Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz resigns in the wake of the DNC email hacking scandal. After Schultz's abrupt resignation, Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge was named the chair of the Democratic convention and Donna Brazile, former Al Gore campaign manager and Bill Clinton adviser, temporarily takes control of the Democratic Party through the election.

July 27, 2016: At a news conference, Trump has an overt message for Russia, in relation to Hillary Clinton's emails.

"Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," he said. "I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press."

Clinton's campaign reacted predictably, with outrage, saying Trump was encouraging espionage by a foreign government.

Also during the summer, according to the Daily Beast and CNN, the head of Cambridge Analytics, a data firm that did work for the Trump campaign, reaches out to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and offered to help organize and release Hillary Clinton's missing 33,000 missing emails. Assange later confirmed on Twitter that a contact was made, but said the offer was rejected.



Julian Assange ♦
@JulianAssange

I can confirm an approach by Cambridge Analytica [prior to November last year] and can confirm that it was rejected by WikiLeaks.

12:35 PM - Oct 25, 2017

364

1,727

3,359

Analytica is financially backed by billionaire Trump supporter Robert Mercer and his daughter Rebekah. Clinton said she deleted 33,000 personal emails from her time as secretary of state. To this date they have been the subject of much interest, including from Trump, who still mentions them regularly.



POLITICS

Robert Mercer Is A Force To Be Reckoned With In Finance And Conservative Politics

Aug. 4, 2016: Obama CIA Director John Brennan confronts his Russian counterpart about Russia's interference, as he later recounted in congressional testimony in May 2017. "[I] told him if you go down this road, it's going to have serious consequences,

not only for the bilateral relationship, but for our ability to work with Russia on any issue, because it is an assault on our democracy," Brennan said on Meet the Press in July 2017. Brennan's statements also followed attacks that the Obama administration faltered on deflecting Russian interference in the 2016 elections.

Aug. 15, 2016: According to legal filings on Papadopoulos, after weeks of back and forth about a possible "off the record" trip to Moscow, a campaign supervisor writes in an email, "I would encourage you" and another foreign policy adviser to the Campaign to 'make the trip [], if it is feasible.' " The trip did not take place.

Aug. 19, 2016: Manafort resigns from the Trump campaign amid reports of suspicious payments for work he did for Russian linked elements in Ukraine. This marks the second shakeup of Trump senior campaign staff.



NATIONAL SECURITY

What Is Money Laundering? And Why Does It Matter To Robert Mueller?

Aug. 21, 2016: Roger Stone cryptically tweets, "Trust me, it will soon be Podesta's time in the barrel, #Crooked Hillary" (his Twitter account was suspended in late October 2017.) Podesta was among the primary targets of hacks to the Democratic National Committee computer network; his emails were released by WikiLeaks starting Oct. 7.

Sept. 8, 2016: Then-Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., meets with Kislyak in his Senate Office. This would be reported by the Washington Post and confirmed by NPR in March 2017, the same day that Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., questioned Sessions about the meeting during Sessions' confirmation hearing to be attorney general. Sessions maintains that he never met with Russians or intermediaries "about the Trump campaign," even though he was a top surrogate for the campaign at the time. Sessions did ultimately recuse himself from the Russia investigation.

Jan. 27, 2017: Papadopoulos sits for an interview with the FBI, during which he "made material false statements and material omissions," according to court filings released Oct. 30.

Oct. 5, 2017: Papadopoulos pleads guilty to making false statements to FBI agents.

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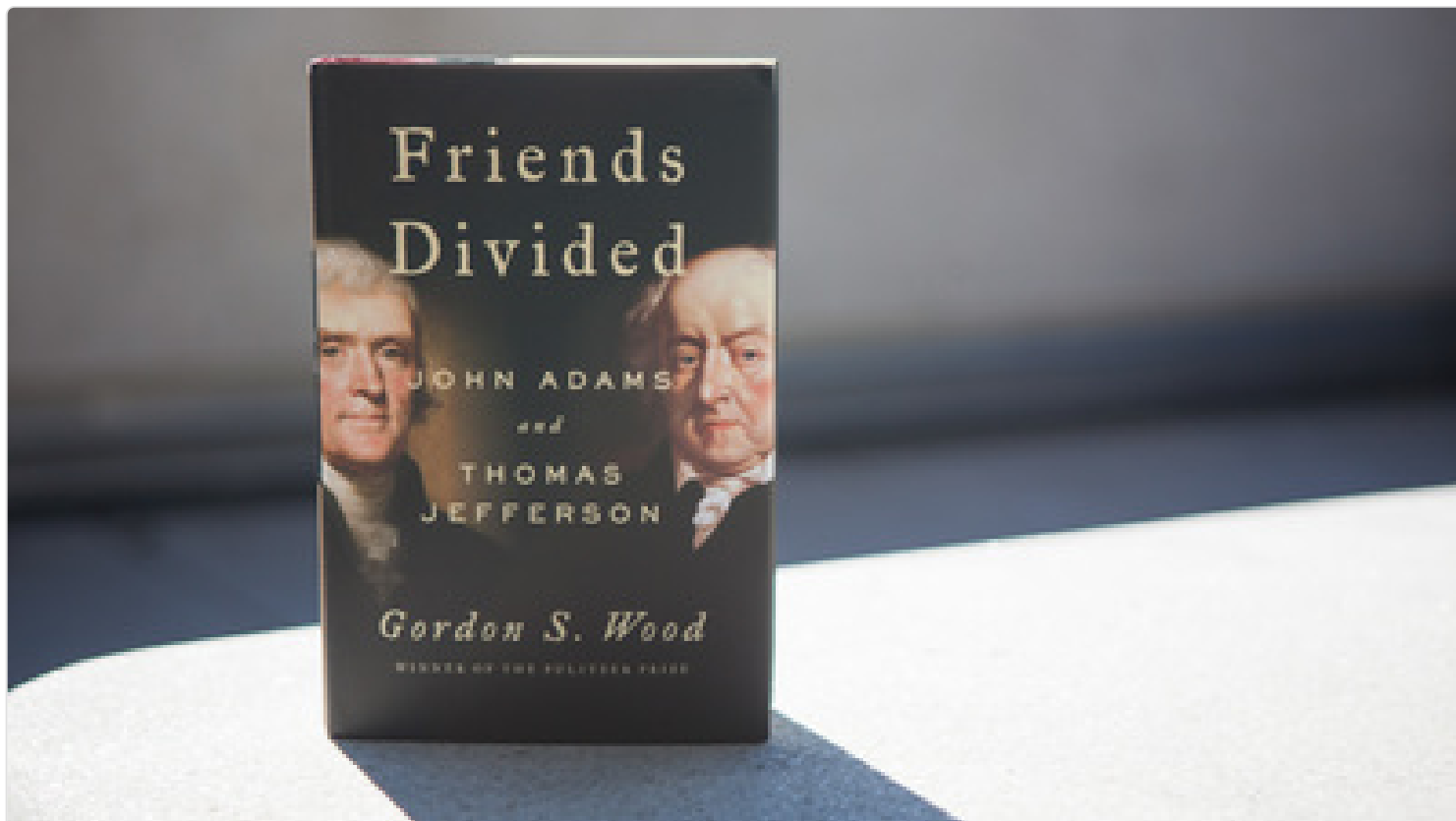
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