

THE MOSCOW PROJECT

Memo to Interested Parties

From: Moscow Project, Center for American Progress Action Fund

Subject: In Post-Indictment Environment, Progressives Must Speak Out on Trump Campaign's Collusion with Russia

The Russia investigation has entered a new phase, which requires progressives to adopt a new approach. The recent indictments and plea agreement involving Trump campaign officials make clear that the investigation into Russia's coordination with the Trump campaign is serious, further along than most perceived, and will be a major issue throughout 2018. Therefore, to protect the Mueller investigation and the rule of law, members of Congress must clearly and forcefully articulate to the public [what we know happened](#), what is at stake, and why the investigation must continue unimpeded.

This is essential, because as more and more evidence of illegal activity is revealed, President Trump's supporters in Congress will continue to step up their efforts to both undermine the investigation and block action to protect the United States from future attacks. Trump's defenders have a concerted four-part political strategy to muddy the waters by using Russian-modeled tactics:

- First, Trump's defenders are concocting bizarre conspiracy theories, inventing faux scandals about "[unmasking](#)," "[deep-state leaks](#)," and now "[Uranium One](#)" to distract and deflect from the investigation. Not only are these tactics straight out of the Kremlin playbook, they were in fact reinforced last week by the Kremlin when [President Putin](#), Russian [state media](#), and Russia's [online cyber operatives](#) all pushed the very same messages as Trump's defenders.
- Second, Trump's defenders are trying to [attack Robert Mueller's integrity and credibility](#) to undercut the findings of his investigation.
- Third, Trump's defenders have tried to make the investigation [all about the Dossier](#) and then claim it is discredited because it was a byproduct of bipartisan opposition research.
- Fourth, they are working to [stymie](#) and [quickly conclude](#) the congressional investigations, so they can argue that a thorough bipartisan investigation was conducted and that any contrary results from the Mueller investigation must be somehow compromised or partisan. This also means short-changing the broader investigation into

Russian interference. The Mueller indictment, as well as recent congressional hearings, show just how many unanswered questions remain.

While it might be ideal to wait to speak out until Mueller finishes his investigation, Trump's defenders in Congress [are not waiting](#) to defend the President's actions or to pass judgment on the investigation. The heightened risk to Trump from Mueller's investigation also means there is a heightened risk to the Mueller investigation from Trump. All those who care about the integrity of the republic do not have the luxury to wait until the investigation concludes before speaking out about the clear collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government.

The risk to the investigation is so great because the evidence that has been uncovered is [overwhelming](#). For months now, more and more information has been uncovered about the President, his campaign, his businesses and their relationship with Russia that paint a clear and stark picture: the Trump campaign colluded and the President is likely compromised by a hostile foreign power. There is no need for Members of Congress to wait for the Mueller investigation to finish to point out what is now obvious:

- (1) the Trump campaign was compromised by the Russians;
- (2) Trump's campaign colluded with a hostile foreign power to influence the U.S. election;
and
- (3) the President obstructed justice to block the investigation into these potential crimes.

In addition to attacking the investigation, the Republican-controlled Congress has also failed to take action to protect America against future attacks, which have not stopped. Russia has been coming for our [financial systems](#) and [electric grid](#), and possibly our [nuclear silos](#). Left unchecked, their aggression could mean rampant identity theft, widespread power outages, and even failures at nuclear sites. Additionally, Russia continues to try to sow discord in the United States by [conducting online disinformation campaigns](#) on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The Republican Congress is currently [neglecting efforts](#) to protect our election system from future cyber-attacks, leaving our voting system totally exposed. They have done nothing to require accountability from social media companies. They have done nothing to bolster the FBI's efforts to counter Russian espionage, or to improve our cyber capabilities. The weakness of the Republican Congress in the face of this [attack on our democracy](#) will only invite future attacks.

A Clear Message to the Public: The Trump Campaign Colluded with Russia

We know there were two campaigns to elect Donald Trump: the Trump campaign and the Russian campaign. The Russian campaign was first revealed by the Intelligence Community's [report](#) where it unanimously concluded that Russians were actively seeking to elect Trump. Since that time, revelation after revelation has shown just how focused the Russians were on electing Trump and how suspiciously sophisticated they were in their interventions in the U.S.

election. To believe that there was no collusion is to believe that these two campaigns with the same goal, the same strategy, and multiple points of contact who were eager to work together somehow remained entirely separate throughout the election. But given what we now know it is almost impossible to believe that is the case.

First, we know the Trump campaign was eager to collude. When Donald Trump Jr. was told that the Russians had compromising information on Secretary Clinton and wanted to meet, he did not contact the FBI; rather, [his response](#) was “if it’s what you say I love it,” and he arranged the meeting. At no point did he suggest surprise that the Russian government was working to get Trump elected. When Trump campaign foreign policy advisor George Papadopoulos [learned](#) that Russia said it had stolen Clinton’s emails, he did not contact the FBI. Instead, he also sought to set up a meeting with Russian officials. Papadopoulos later [lied to the FBI](#) about the attempts to arrange a meeting, recognizing how damaging the information would be.

Second, we have evidence that the Trump campaign colluded. The June 9th meeting in Trump Tower between the highest-ranking officials in the Trump campaign and representatives of the Russian government was collusion. The meeting was [agreed to and arranged](#) by Donald Trump Jr. because it was “part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump” and the Russians were offering “official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary.”

Third, the Trump campaign was filled with Kremlin-linked figures. Paul Manafort received [at least \\$60 million](#) from Kremlin-linked sources and [offered a secret briefing](#) on the campaign to one of Putin’s close allies. He has been [indicted](#) for a conspiracy against the United States stemming from his time running a candidate in the Ukrainian elections who was backed by Putin. Michael Flynn was [paid by the Russians](#) and [sat next to Vladimir Putin](#) at the RT gala three months before joining the Trump campaign. Carter Page, one of Trump’s [first five foreign policy advisors](#), was [actively recruited by Russian intelligence officers](#) in 2013 to be a spy for Russia and [received permission](#) from the campaign to travel to Moscow in July 2016. Papadopoulos [repeatedly sought](#) to meet with Kremlin officials and then lied to the FBI about it.

Fourth, there were constant contacts and interaction with the Russians during the campaign. There are at least 25 known contacts and interactions during the campaign. Furthermore, we now know that one of Trump’s five foreign policy advisors, George Papadopoulos, was [in repeated contact](#) with individuals with links to the Russian government.

Fifth, the Trump campaign had advanced warning of Russian military intelligence hacking of John Podesta emails. Roger Stone [knew John Podesta’s emails would be released](#) months before they were released. Cambridge Analytica, a company that was literally and figuratively [at the center of](#) the Trump digital campaign, [sought to help Wikileaks](#) organize the material it received from the Russians.

Sixth, Trump tried to profit from his political position by seeking Kremlin support for the construction of a Trump Tower in Moscow. In 2015, in the midst of the Republican primary,

Trump's long-time business associate Felix Sater, who has [links to organized crime](#), and Trump's lawyer Michael Cohen sought to reach a deal to [establish a Trump Tower in Moscow](#) utilizing connections to the Kremlin. Michael Cohen even [contacted Dmitry Peskov](#), President Putin's press secretary.

Seventh, the Trump campaign and its associates have lied at every turn. The Trump campaign has continuously lied about contacts and meetings with Russians, only admitting that these meetings occurred after they were publicly revealed. Now we know that some members of the campaign have been [lying to federal law enforcement](#) as well.

Eighth, Trump was an active participant in Russian messaging. The Trump campaign's messages were heavily reliant on Russian-acquired material in the critical home stretch of the election. In the last month of the campaign alone, Trump cited material stolen by the Russians and laundered through WikiLeaks [at least 164 times](#). Trump and Manafort also cited fake news [stories produced by Russian propaganda outlets](#) Sputnik and RT even though no other media outlet carried those reports. And the Russian campaign was suspiciously knowledgeable about the inner workings of American politics, adopting the same strategy as the Trump campaign to [suppress certain Democratic voters](#) with targeted outreach.

Ninth, Trump fired Comey and obstructed justice to try to stop the investigation. The President himself admitted that he fired James Comey [because of the Russia investigation](#). He then [bragged to the Russians](#) the next day that firing Comey had taken the pressure off with respect to the Russia investigation. Comey also testified to Congress that the President [repeatedly pressured him](#) to end the investigation.

This has all the hallmarks of a criminal conspiracy, one that threatens our national security and the integrity of our democratic system itself.

Key Points

- The continuing deluge of revelations about the Trump campaign have made it clear that the Trump campaign was compromised by the Russians; they colluded with a hostile foreign power to impact the U.S. election; and the President [obstructed justice](#) to block the investigation into these potential crimes.
- We now know there were [two campaigns](#) to elect Donald Trump: the Trump campaign and the Russian campaign. We've seen just how focused the Russians were on electing Trump and how suspiciously sophisticated they were in their interventions in the U.S. election. To believe that there was no collusion is to believe that these two campaigns with the same goal, the same strategy, and multiple points of contact who were eager to work together somehow remained entirely separate throughout the election.
- The Trump campaign was eager to collude and they did so, meeting with representatives of the Russian government to try and sway the election in their favor.

- The highest echelons of the campaign were compromised, with high-ranking officials like Trump's campaign chairman [Paul Manafort](#) and former National Security Advisor [Michael Flynn](#) taking money from Russia. Manafort, who has been [charged](#) with conspiracy against the United States, even [offered secret campaign briefings](#) to a Putin-aligned Russian oligarch.
- Trump sought to profit off of his connections to the Kremlin when he [tried to get its backing](#) to build a Trump Tower in Moscow in the middle of the election campaign.
- This has all the hallmarks of a criminal conspiracy, one that threatens our national security and the integrity of our democratic system itself. While more and more evidence is revealed that foreign adversaries hold sway over high-ranking people in the Trump orbit, Russia continues to target our [financial systems](#) and [electric grid](#), and possibly our [nuclear silos](#). Left unchecked, their aggression could mean rampant identity theft, widespread power outages, and even failures at nuclear sites. We need those in power to be looking out for the interests of Americans, not acting on the interests of the foreign countries they may be beholden to.