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Collusion at Trump Tower: In Their Own Words

By James Lamond and Siena Cicarelli

Two years ago, in the middle of the 2016 presidential race, the senior-most members of the Trump campaign—Donald Trump Jr., Campaign Chairman Paul Manafort, and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner—met in Trump Tower with Russian operatives with close ties to the Kremlin.

The attendees and President Donald Trump’s defenders have argued that the meeting was not collusion. But in the year since the meeting’s existence was revealed, a trove of documents released to the public, including emails and other communications between the meeting’s participants, has demonstrated otherwise.

These documents make clear that the meeting was collusion and that those involved knew it:

- 1. Before the meeting, both sides explicitly agreed on the meeting’s purpose: The Russian government would provide damaging information on Hillary Clinton as part of its ongoing support of the Trump campaign.**
- 2. At every opportunity, those involved in the meeting lied to cover up its existence and hide what was discussed.**
- 3. After the meeting was revealed, the people involved panicked, recognizing that it was collusion.**

In sum, the people involved knew there was collusion, which is why they tried to cover it up.

This is clear just by reading their own words.

1. Before the meeting, both sides explicitly agreed on the purpose of the meeting: The Russian government would provide damaging information on Hillary Clinton as part of its ongoing support of the Trump campaign.

June 3, 2016: Rob Goldstone, who works for a Russian oligarch close to Putin, emailed Donald Trump Jr. to arrange a meeting “as part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump.”

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>>>>> On Jun 3, 2016, at 10:36 AM, Rob Goldstone [REDACTED] wrote:
>>>>>
>>>>> Good morning
>>>>> Emin just called and asked me to contact you with something very interesting.
>>>>> 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.
>>>>> This is obviously very high level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its
government's support for Mr. Trump - helped along by Aras and Emin.
>>>>> What do you think is the best way to handle this information and would you be able to speak to
Emin about it directly?
>>>>> I can also send this info to your father via Rhona, but it is ultra sensitive so wanted to send to
you first.
>>>>> Best
>>>>> Rob Goldstone
>>>>>
>>>>> This iphone speaks many languages
>>>>>
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June 3, 2016: Trump Jr. responded to the inquiry, accepting the Kremlin's help and providing strategic guidance on the timing of the potential release of the information, based on when it would be most advantageous for the campaign.

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>>>>>
>>>>> On Jun 3, 2016, at 10:53, Donald Trump Jr. [REDACTED] wrote:
>>>>>
>>>>> Thanks Rob I appreciate that. I am on the road at the moment but perhaps I just speak to Emin
first. Seems we have some time and if it's what you say I love it especially later in the summer. Could
we do a call first thing next week when I am back?
>>>>> Best,
>>>>> Don
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2. At every opportunity, those involved lied to cover up its existence and conceal what was discussed.

When the existence of the meeting was initially reported last year, Trump Jr. changed his story each day as new information was revealed:

July 8, 2017: *The New York Times* [broke the news](#) that Trump Jr. "arranged a meeting at Trump Tower in Manhattan with a Russian lawyer who has connections to the Kremlin."

Trump Jr. issued a [statement saying](#): "It was a short introductory meeting. I asked Jared [Kushner] and Paul [Manafort] to stop by. We primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children that was active and popular with American families years ago and was since ended by the Russian government, but it was not a campaign issue at the time and there was no follow up."

"I was asked to attend the meeting by an acquaintance, but was not told the name of the person I would be meeting with beforehand."

July 9, 2017: *The New York Times* [broke the news](#) that Trump Jr. was promised damaging information on Clinton before agreeing to the meeting.

Trump Jr. [issued a new statement](#): "After pleasantries were exchanged the woman stated that she had information that individuals connected to Russia were funding the Democratic National Committee and supporting Mrs. Clinton. Her statements were vague, ambiguous and made no sense. No details or supporting information was provided or even offered. It quickly became clear that she had no meaningful information. She then changed subjects and began discussing the adoption of Russian children and mentioned the Magnitsky Act. It became clear to me that this was the true agenda all along and that the claims of potentially helpful information were a pretext for the meeting."

July 10, 2017: *The New York Times* reported that Trump Jr. was told that the compromising information about Clinton was part of a Russian effort to help his campaign.

Trump Jr.'s lawyer [responded](#): "In my view, this is much ado about nothing. During this busy period, Robert Goldstone contacted Don Jr. in an email and suggested that people had information concerning alleged wrongdoing by Democratic Party front-runner, Hillary Clinton, in her dealings with Russia."

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Goldstone is a music publicist who worked on the 2013 Miss Universe pageant with the Trump family. Don Jr.'s takeaway from this communication was that someone had information potentially helpful to the campaign and it was coming from someone he knew. Don Jr. had no knowledge as to what specific information, if any, would be discussed."

Trump Jr. [tweeted](#): "Obviously I'm the first person on a campaign to ever take a meeting to hear info about an opponent...went nowhere but had to listen."

3. After the meeting came to light, the people involved panicked that it was revealed, recognizing that it was collusion.

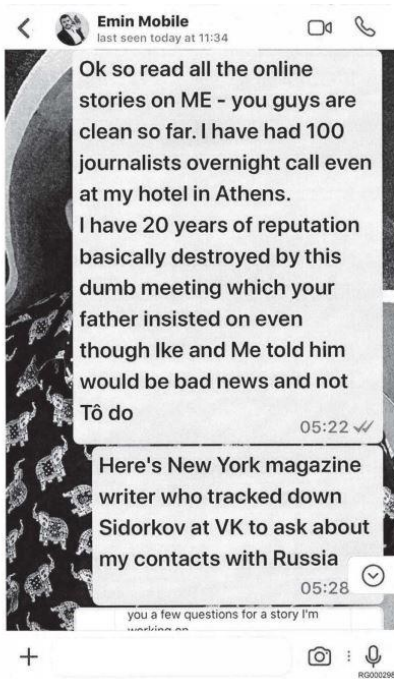
On the Trump side, senior officials, including President Trump, attempted to downplay the meeting and the president's involvement in crafting the response.

- On July 8, 2017, as news of the meeting broke, Trump [personally dictated](#) the initial statement from Trump Jr. saying the meeting's attendees had "primarily discussed a program about the adoption of Russian children" and that the subject of the meeting was "not a campaign issue at the time."
- Publicly, however, the Trump White House repeatedly [denied](#) that the President was involved in the statement's drafting. On July 31, 2017, reporting from *The Washington Post* [revealed](#) that the President did, in fact, help dictate the misleading statement. In response, on August 1, 2017, the White House [claimed](#) that the President only "weighed in" on Trump Jr.'s statement.
- On January 29, 2018, in a [confidential letter](#) to Special Counsel Robert Mueller, Trump's legal team finally acknowledged that Trump "dictated" Trump Jr.'s first misleading statement, directly contradicting previous denials from Trump's legal team and press office.

While the Trump team tried to get their story straight, the other participants in the meeting tried to coordinate their response with representatives from the Trump team, as seen in private conversations obtained and released by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

July 9-10: Goldstone admits to Emin Agalarov, son of the Russian oligarch, that he is lying to the press about the origins/purpose of the meeting.

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July 9: Goldstone continues to coordinate a response.

From: Rob Goldstone [REDACTED] > on behalf of Rob Goldstone
Sent: Sunday, July 09, 2017 05:29 AM
To: [REDACTED]; Ike
Subject: Washington Post

Hi
Bunch of big hitting political journalists have called Me (no idea how they got my number) re the story in NY times today Washington Post was the most pushy and keen to hang this on you (Emin) - I tried to assure her that I had been the one requesting Don meet with her and would not comment on who originated the request in Moscow.
Should we prepare a statement?
Trump lawyers are also in a statement apparently saying the reason for the meeting was "mis represented " by us and that her agenda was Manitzky act and adoption.
They also say FBI may be investigating this Meeting further Thoughts??

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July 23: Incoming White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci tells Goldstone to get their stories "consistent" and that they'll be able to "ride it out."

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From: Anthony Scaramucci [REDACTED]
Date: July 23, 2017 at 23:20:38 GMT+7
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: I don't officially start..

..until the 15th, Rob. But I just wanted to drop you a line to say if you ever need to pick my brains then my door is always open.

Obviously there is still pressure on all sides, but if we remain consistent and united I don't envisage any issues we can't ride out.

Best wishes,
Anthony

Sent from my iPhone

In his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Goldstone denied that any collusion had taken place, but struggled to actually define it.

2 A. If I heard the word, dah, dah, dah,
3 colluded with Russia, then I would expect that
4 that was collusion. But it would -- I didn't hear
5 anything like that.

6 Q. So anything short of hearing the words
7 collusion or colluded with Russia would not
8 constitute collusion in your mind?

9 A. Correct.

But on June 11, just after Trump Jr. released the emails leading up to the meeting, Ike Kaveladze, another meeting attendee, received an email [from his son](#) asking why Trump Jr. had just admitted to collusion:

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From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> on behalf of [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 08:50 AM
To: Ike Kaveladze
Subject: dt jr
Attachments: DEdnhw-WsAEbW9N.jpg-large.pdf

Why did he release this e-mail admitting to collusion?

The participants of the June 9 meeting clearly knew it was collusion, and they made a coordinated and concerted effort to cover it up. In doing so, they ended up contradicting their own stories. Despite Trump Jr.'s [previous statements](#) that there was no follow-up from the meeting, Goldstone sent an email later in the summer to Trump Jr. and Trump associate Dan Scavino, currently the White House Director for Social Media, "following up" on a topic he discussed with Trump Jr. and Manafort at the meeting: having the Russians encourage Russian-Americans to vote for Trump by creating a page on the Russian social networking site VK.

Message

From: Rob Goldstone [REDACTED]
Sent: 6/29/2016 10:16:07 AM
To: Dan Scavino [REDACTED]
CC: Donald Trump Jr. [REDACTED]; Rhona Graff [REDACTED]; Konstantin Sidorkov [REDACTED]
Subject: Russia's largest social media network "VK" - offers Trump Campaign message to over 2 million registered Russian American voters in the USA
Attachments: donaldtrump.pdf; ATT00001.txt

Good Morning

Dan, I am following up on an email a while back of something I had mentioned to Don and Paul Manafort during a meeting recently. There are believed to be around 2 million Russian American voters living in the USA - and more than 1.6 million of these use the Russian "Facebook" site V Kontakte "VK" as their preferred social media outlet. As I mentioned to you guys, through Emin and my contact at VK, they want to create a VOTE Trump 2016 promotion aired directly at these users - - people who will be voting in November. At the time, Paul had said he would welcome it and so I had the VK folks mock up a basic sample page - which I am re-sending for your approval now. It would merely require Mr. Trump to drop in a short message to Russian American voters - or a generic message depending on your choice - and the page can be up and running very quickly. I have copied the head of Partner Relations for VK - Konstantin Sikorkov - who is a good friend of mine and Emin's - on this email as he would oversee the promotion of the page etc.

The June 9 meeting gives us a window into the Trump campaign's corrupt approach to the election. The statements, emails, and texts from the participants make one thing very clear: The senior-most members of Trump's team willingly and knowingly attended a meeting whose purpose was collusion with a hostile foreign power. From the initial emails setting up the meeting to the eventual efforts to cover it up, their own words give them away.