

Breaking Down the Mueller Report
Jared Kushner's Transition Meetings with Russian Individuals
([Mueller Report Pages 159-163](#))

Toplines

- According to the Mueller Report, almost immediately after Trump's election, Jared Kushner met with two high-ranking individuals: Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador at the time, and Russian banker Sergey Gorkov, who heads the sanctioned Russian state-owned bank Vnesheconombank (VEB).
- Why was Kushner meeting with high-ranking, Kremlin-connected Russians when the Trump transition team was well aware of Russian efforts to interfere in the elections?
- Why did Kushner later hide these meetings from the government?

Key Facts from the Report

- Eight days after the election, Kushner received a meeting invitation from then-Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak. The two men had [met](#) earlier in April 2016, during the campaign, and Kislyak wanted to meet with Kushner for a second time.
- Kushner took the meeting with Kislyak on November 30, 2016 at Trump Tower. Michael Flynn was also in attendance. At this meeting, Kushner told Kislyak that the incoming Trump administration wanted to "start afresh with U.S.-Russia relations."
- The Mueller report notes that "Kislyak floated the idea of having Russian generals brief the Transition Team on the topic using a secure communications line. After Flynn explained that there was no secure line in the Transition Team offices, Kushner asked Kislyak if they could communicate using secure facilities at the Russian Embassy. Kislyak quickly rejected that idea."
- Kislyak wanted to meet with Kushner a third time, although Kushner ended up sending his aide Avi Berkowitz instead. Berkowitz met with Kislyak on December 12, 2016, and Kislyak told Berkowitz that he wanted Kushner to meet with Sergey Gorkov.
- Kushner and Gorkov met the following day on December 13, 2016, in Manhattan. The Mueller report notes that "at the start of the meeting, Gorkov presented Kushner with two gifts: a painting and a bag of soil from the town in Belarus where Kushner's family originated."
- Kushner told the Special Counsel that the meeting was "diplomatic," and that they did not discuss business or Kushner's companies. However, in a 2017 public statement, VEB indicated that Gorkov met with Kushner "in Kushner's capacity as CEO of Kushner Companies for the purpose of discussing business."
- When asked about the Gorkov meeting, Kushner claimed he did not prepare for the meeting and "that no one on the Transition Team even did a Google search for Gorkov's name." Berkowitz contradicted Kushner's account, however, claiming that he did Google Gorkov "and told Kushner that Gorkov appeared to be a banker."

Overview

Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law, played an active role in the Trump campaign and transition and now serves as a senior White House advisor. Despite the fact that the Trump campaign was [briefed](#) as early as August 2016 about Russian attempts to infiltrate the campaign, Kushner continued to meet with Russian individuals throughout the transition. Although Kushner seemed eager to take both of these meetings, he later [failed to disclose](#) both his November meeting with Kislyak and his subsequent meeting with Gorkov to the U.S. government while going through the security clearance process. These meetings should raise serious questions about the Trump team's outreach to Russians during the transition, and their dedication to covering up the meetings after the fact.

During the November meeting between Kislyak and Kushner, both sides made alarming suggestions. Kislyak offered to have Russian generals brief the Trump transition team, and Kushner suggested that the two sides communicate using a backchannel through the Russian embassy, which would have created significant national security risks. This meeting led to another meeting between Kushner aide Avi Berkowitz and Kislyak, which in turn led to a meeting between Kushner and Gorkov. Although the meeting with Gorkov was described as being planned on short notice, the Russian banker managed to bring two gifts with him, one of which appeared to be highly personal and specific to Kushner and thus would have taken some time to procure. Kushner also claims to have been unprepared for the meeting, but Berkowitz contradicted this claim.

Kushner and Gorkov also presented conflicting stories about the purpose of the meeting. Kushner claimed it was "diplomatic," whereas Gorkov claimed he met with Kushner about business. The Mueller report was unable to deconflict the stories, noting "the investigation did not resolve the apparent conflict in the accounts of Kushner and Gorkov or determine whether the meeting was diplomatic in nature (as Kushner stated), focused on business (as VEB's public statement indicated), or whether it involved some combination of those matters or other matters." Gorkov seemed happy with the outcome of the meeting; a few days later his assistant texted Kushner's assistant, saying "please inform your side that the information about the meeting had a very positive response!"

Remaining Questions

- Gorkov was able to bring Kushner gifts that seem to have been planned out in advance. How far ahead was Kushner's meeting with Gorkov planned?
- Mueller was unable to explain why Kushner and Gorkov's explanations for their meeting differed. Was the meeting a diplomatic meeting, or did it involve Kushner's businesses?
- Kushner claims he didn't even Google Gorkov before meeting with him, but Berkowitz said he Googled Gorkov and told Kushner that he was a banker. How much did Kushner know about Gorkov going into the meeting? What were his objectives?
- Kushner has repeatedly tried to [play dumb](#) when questioned about his involvement in these meetings, but the fact remains that he seems to have known enough to [lie](#) about these [meetings](#) later on, including [failing to disclose](#) his December meetings with Kislyak and Gorkov on his security clearance forms. Why did Kushner repeatedly hide his meetings with Russian officials? Did he lie about any other meetings with Russians?