

Breaking Down the Mueller Report
Invitations to Russia

(Mueller Report Volume 1, p. 76-103)

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- **Several members of Trump’s campaign team fielded invitations to travel to Russia, or to have Trump travel to meet with Putin or other Kremlin officials. (Trump did not travel to Russia during the election.)**
- **At least two members of the Trump campaign *did* travel to Russia during the election, including one—Carter Page—while actively working for the Trump campaign.**
- **Invitations to travel or to meet with Kremlin-linked officials, and even Putin himself, are often a tactic deployed by Russia to interfere in Western elections.**

Key Facts from the Report

- At least five people working for the Trump Organization or campaign, including Michael Cohen, Michael Flynn, Rhona Graff, Carter Page, and George Papadopoulos, received invitations for them or Trump to travel to Russia or another country to meet with Kremlin-linked officials.
- These invitations began in late 2015 and spanned much of the Republican primary period, but appear to have stopped in June 2016, around the time that *The Washington Post* [first reported](#) that Russia had hacked into the Democratic National committee.
- Both Michael Flynn and Carter Page traveled to Russia during Trump’s candidacy. Flynn [attended the state-run RT gala](#) in December 2015 (prior to joining the Trump campaign). Page [went in July 2016](#) to speak at the commencement ceremony for the New Economic School in Moscow. Page did so while part of the campaign and discussed the trip with high-ranking campaign officials, even suggesting that Trump go instead.
- George Papadopoulos, the first Trump official to know that Russia planned to release stolen emails, passed along invitations from Kremlin-linked contacts at least 13 times.
- Since 2016, pro-Kremlin politicians in other countries, including France, Germany, and Italy, have traveled to Russia during elections that have appeared to feature Russian interference attempts.

Overview

Kremlin-linked operatives made consistent and sustained efforts to bring Trump campaign officials and/or Trump to Russia or to meetings with Kremlin officials. The Mueller report lists several instances of people suggesting such a trip during the campaign or doing so themselves:

Michael Cohen and Felix Sater:

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- During their discussions surrounding Trump Tower Moscow, longtime Trump business associate Felix Sater [repeatedly suggested](#) to Michael Cohen that Cohen or Trump travel to Russia. Sater first suggested such a trip in late 2015, and discussions between him and Cohen continued until at least May 2016 (Volume 1, 76-78).
 - In May, Sater also suggested that Cohen or Trump attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2016. Cohen rejected the offer on June 14, 2016, the same day *The Washington Post* first [reported](#) that Russia had hacked into the Democratic National Committee (Volume 1, 78). It is unclear if the two events are related.

Michael Flynn:

- In December 2015, Michael Flynn traveled to Russia to [attend a gala](#) celebrating Russia's state-run television network RT. Although this trip took place before Flynn joined the campaign as an [adviser](#) in February 2016, Flynn later [told *The Washington Post*](#) that he first spoke with Trump in "late summer 2015" and had been advising Trump and other candidates throughout the primary process.

Rhona Graff:

- In late December 2015, "Mira Duma—a contact of Ivanka Trump's from the fashion industry—first passed along invitations for Ivanka Trump and candidate Trump from Sergei Prikhodko, a Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation." Ivanka forwarded the invitations to Rhona Graff, who declined on Trump's behalf (Volume 1, 78).
 - Prikhodko himself reiterated the invitation via email in March 2016. Graff again declined, this time preparing a letter for Trump to sign (Volume 1, 79).
 - According to the report, there is no evidence that there was additional follow-up or that Trump himself became aware of the invitation (Volume 1, 79).
- In March 2016, Graff received another invitation for Trump to speak at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum from Robert Foresman, a New York-based investment banker and friend of Jared Kushner. Foresman said he was passing along the invitation from "a Russian presidential aide involved with the Roscongress Foundation." Graff forwarded emails from Foresman to Corey Lewandowski and Stephen Miller. According to the report, there is no evidence that there was additional follow-up or that Trump himself became aware of the invitation (Volume 1, 79-80).

Carter Page:

- Carter Page first suggested that the campaign organize "a direct meeting in Moscow between Mr[.] Trump and Putin" in a January 30, 2016 email to senior campaign officials in which he also criticized sanctions on Russia (Volume 1, 98).
 - In April 2016, Page was invited to give a commencement speech at Moscow's New Economic School. After emailing campaign superiors for permission to attend, Page

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suggested to fellow advisers that “candidate Trump take his place at the commencement ceremony in Moscow” (Volume 1, 99).

- Page traveled to Moscow in early July. While there, he [spoke with](#) Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich about US sanctions on Russia and met with Andrey Baranov, the head of investor relations at the state-owned energy company Rosneft (Volume 1, 100-101).
- Page traveled to Moscow again during the transition, and met with “at least one Russian government official” (Volume 1, 102-103).

George Papadopoulos:

- George Papadopoulos repeatedly passed along invitations for Trump or someone on his campaign to travel to Russia from his Kremlin-linked contacts Joseph Mifsud, Olga Polonskaya, and Ivan Timofeev (Volume 1, 84-93).
 - On March 24, 2016, Papadopoulos [emailed multiple campaign officials](#) about a meeting where Mifsud offered “to arrange a meeting between us and the Russian leadership to discuss U.S.-Russia ties under President Trump. They are keen to host us in a ‘neutral’ city, or directly in Moscow” (Volume 1, 84).
 - One week later, Papadopoulos repeated the suggestion at a meeting that Trump and Jeff Sessions attended (Volume 1, 86).
 - Beginning in April 2016, Papadopoulos also [corresponded with](#) Ivan Timofeev, a member of the Russian International Affairs Council, about “how best to arrange a ‘Moscow visit’” to hold “a ‘potential’ meeting between the Campaign and Russian government officials” (Volume 1, 88).
 - Papadopoulos shared invitations to such a meeting with several campaign officials, including Sam Clovis, Stephen Miller, Corey Lewandowski, Paul Manafort, and Walid Phares. In total, he relayed offers of a meeting between the Trump campaign and Russian officials or a trip to Russia at least 13 times (Volume 1, 84-93).
 - For more on Papadopoulos’s contacts with Kremlin-linked operatives and what he told the Trump campaign, see [“Breaking Down the Mueller Report: What George Papadopoulos Knew.”](#)

Though Trump did not ultimately travel to Russia during the campaign, the invitations are notable because trips to Russia to meet with Kremlin-linked officials and/or Putin appear to be a mainstay of Russia’s efforts to interfere in Western elections.

- During the 2017 French presidential election, Marine Le Pen, whose far-right National Front Party [received significant funding](#) from a Kremlin-linked bank, [traveled to Russia](#) to meet with Putin in the final month of the campaign. Kremlin-linked actors subsequently [released emails stolen from her opponent](#).
- Frauke Petry, the leader of Germany’s far-right Alternative for Germany party, [traveled to Russia](#) in advance of the September 2017 federal election to discuss “possible cooperation between

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Russian and German regional assemblies with her hosts.” Petry’s spokesman “[said](#) the two sides did not discuss possible financial assistance;” however, reporting by *Der Spiegel* and others found that the Kremlin [ran an online propaganda campaign](#) supporting Petry and her party.

- In October 2018, Gianluca Savoini, a former aide to Italian politician Matteo Salvini, [met with Kremlin officials](#) about a deal through which two Russian state-run oil companies would secretly funnel millions of dollars to Salvini’s pro-Kremlin Lega party. Subsequent reporting revealed that Savoini [has taken at least 21 trips](#) to Russia since the beginning of 2018, and that a current member of Salvini’s staff [traveled with him](#) at least once.

Key Questions for the Investigation

- Was Trump aware of the repeated suggestions that he travel to Russia, beyond the ones presented in person by George Papadopoulos?
- Did public [reporting](#) that Russia hacked the DNC play a role in Michael Cohen’s decision to reject Sater’s invitation to travel to Russia?
- Was Flynn in communication with the campaign at the time that he attended the RT Gala? If not, did he discuss the gala with campaign officials once he did join?
- Was the outreach to the Trump campaign part of a larger playbook deployed in France, Germany, and Italy? Was there overlap in operatives, strategies, or execution?
- Did the Trump campaign report any of the invitations to law enforcement or the intelligence community?