

Trump Campaign Allegedly in Contact with Russians 18 Times in 2016



Summary: Reuters said that Donald Trump's presidential campaign was in contact with Russia at least 18 times during the last months of the 2016 race.

President Donald Trump's campaign and presidency have been plagued with scandal, but one of the most serious accusations lodged against him is that he colluded with Russia in order to win the 2016 Presidential Election. While this claim is still being investigated, *Reuters* stated that sources informed them that his campaign had been in contact with the Kremlin 18 times last year.

Trump has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, but that hasn't quelled the suspicion surrounding him. On May 9, he fired FBI Director James Comey for his alleged incompetence, but critics said that Trump was actually getting rid of him because he was investigating the president's ties to Russia and wanted more money to do so. After Comey's firing, Democrats called for an independent investigation and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein answered the call by appointing former FBI Director Robert Mueller to take over the probe that was originally overseen by Comey.

While the government is looking into the accusations, the media has been working on its own to uncover the truth. On Thursday, *Reuters* released an exclusive report that said Michael Flynn and other Trump campaign advisors called or emailed Russian officials or others with Russian ties at least 18 times between April and November 2016. The publication said they spoke with current and former U.S. officials, who were unnamed.

Reuters said that these 18 points of contact were previously undisclosed. Six of the contacts include phone calls between Russia's ambassador to the United States, Sergei Kislyak, and Trump's advisors, which included Flynn. Flynn and Kislyak allegedly discussed creating a back channel for Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin to have talks that could bypass U.S. national security bureaucracy.

The other 12 calls, emails, or texts concerned themes such as U.S.-Russia cooperation, according to the sources who spoke to *Reuters*. Experts told the publication that it was not rare for campaigns to speak to foreign officials, but that it was exceptional how often the Trump campaign communicated with individuals with Kremlin ties.

"It's rare to have that many phone calls to foreign officials, especially to a country we consider an adversary or a hostile power," Richard Armitage, former deputy secretary of state, said to *Reuters*.

The White House had initially denied speaking with Russian officials during the 2016 presidential race, but they later revealed that there were four meetings between Kislyak and Trump before the president was elected. Sources told *Reuters* that despite the lack of transparency regarding the communication with the Russians there is no evidence that the Russians helped Trump win the election over his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton.

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Source: *Reuters*

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