

TRUMP'S NEVER-DECLINED INVITATION FROM DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SERGEI PRIKHODKO

In an interview with NYT last year, George Papadopoulos claimed that he had a call scheduled with Stephen Miller on April 27, 2016, when he probably would have told him that Joseph Mifsud had just told him that Russians had dirt on Hillary Clinton in the form of thousands of emails they planned to drop anonymously to help Donald Trump. But the call didn't go through.

PAPADOPOULOS: That's all I can say. I mean, actually, and the reason why I don't know how much wiggle room – I don't think I'm really leaving myself any wiggle room at all because probably 99 percent of my communication with the campaign was over email. You know, I was living in London. You know, I met some officials face to face very briefly. So the place I would have potentially sent this information – I think it's public – I mentioned to Stephen Miller I'm receiving interesting messages from Moscow about a meeting, when the time is right. That was the same day that I had received that information. I think I had a scheduled call with Miller that same day, never went through, and perhaps that's where it went. It just stayed in my mind.

[Later in the interview.]

MAZZETTI: One of the things that seems the most puzzling out of this whole Trump-Russia story is that you're told about this pretty explosive information. It is information that would no doubt

help the Trump campaign. You wanted to help the Trump campaign. You were very eager to gain, cement, a place in the campaign. And yet, you say you didn't tell anyone about it but you did tell the Australian diplomat and the Greek foreign minister. Seems strange for people to sort of –

PAPADOPOULOS: I allegedly told the Australian, and I certainly told the Greek foreign minister, but let's not forget, though, at the time I was shuffling between Europe quite frequently. I wasn't at a campaign headquarters, where I would have the opportunity to sit down and probably talk with campaign heads. So, I actually I don't find it shocking that I wouldn't have told them something like this, considering my interactions with the campaign was, as I stated, probably 99 percent done via email. And maybe – you never know – maybe if the call between myself and Stephen Miller occurred that day, I would have told him. But that call never went through, and we're left with receiving interesting messages from Moscow. It's how fate works sometimes, I guess.

According to his statement of offense, after his second interview with the FBI, he got a new phone number, suggesting he ditched his cell phone.

On or about February 23, 2017, defendant PAPADOPOULOS ceased using his cell phone number and began using a new number.

According to the government's sentencing memo in his case, Papadopoulos hid the existence of a different phone he used to communicate with Mifsud while in London until his fourth and final interview with the FBI.

The defendant also did not notify the government about a cellular phone he used in London during the course of the campaign – that had on it substantial communications between the defendant and the Professor – until his fourth and final proffer session.

This was a guy working pretty hard to hide his communications – including any he had on encrypted apps that would bypass his phone company.

Which is why I find details about the Trump Organization response – or rather, non-response – to an invitation from Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister, Sergei Prikhodko, to attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, the same event Cohen was supposed to attend to arrange the Trump Tower Moscow deal.

Here’s what the timeline of that invitation looks like, according to the Mueller Report (starting at page 78 of Volume I).

December 21, 2015: Mira Duma emails Ivanka passing along Prikhodko’s invite as an attachment

January 7, 2016: Ivanka forwards email to Rhona Graff

January 14, 2016: Graff replies to Duma by email saying Trump would have to decline because of his travel schedule, asking whether she should send a formal declination

January 15, 2016: Duma replies that a formal denial note would be appropriate

March 17, 2016 (according to Trump’s written response, though no email is cited in the report): Prikhodko emails Graff again inviting Trump to SPIEF

March 31, 2016: Graff prepares a two-paragraph letter declining the invitation and forwards it to another

assistant to have Trump sign it, which he doesn't sign

March 31, 2016: Robert Foresman follows up a phone introduction by Mark Burnett with an email to Graff, explaining that he had set up a back channel between George W Bush and Putin and discussing an "approach" by "senior Kremlin officials" asking for a meeting with Lewandowski about topics he did not want to include on an unsecure email

March 31, 2016: At a meeting of Trump's foreign policy advisors, he responds favorably to Papadopoulos' pitch to set up a meeting between Trump and Putin

April 4, 2016: Graff forwards that email to the same assistant who had put the invitation declination on letterhead

April 26, 2016: Foresman reminds Graff

April 27, 2016: Graff forwards the initial March 31 email and the April 26 email to Lewandowski

April 27, 2016: Papadopoulos emails Miller, "Have some interesting messages coming in from Moscow about a trip when the time is right"

April 27, 2016: Papadopoulos emails Lewandowski, "to discuss Russia's interest in hosting Mr. Trump. Have been receiving a lot of calls over the last month about Putin wanting to host him and the team when the time is right"

April 30, 2016: Foresman reminds Graff again, suggesting a meeting with Don Jr or Eric Trump, so he could convey information that "should be conveyed to [the candidate] personally or [to] someone [the candidate] absolutely trusts"

May 2, 2016: Graff forwards the April 30 email to Stephen Miller

May 4, 2016: Cohen tells Sater he would travel before the RNC in July, and Trump would “once he becomes the nominee after the convention”

May 5, 2016: Sater extends invitation purportedly from Peskov to SPIEF

Ultimately, there’s no record Trump did decline the invitation from Prikhodko (nor does the report cite the email he purportedly sent to Graff). Nor does the report describe what happened after Foresman’s invite got sent to Miller.

But it does show that in the wake of Papadopoulos purportedly failing to tell Miller the Russians were offering dirt, he was the guy Lewandowski wanted to field an offer a possible back channel with Russia.

As I disclosed last July, I provided information to the FBI on issues related to the Mueller investigation, so I’m going to include disclosure statements on Mueller investigation posts from here on out. I will include the disclosure whether or not the stuff I shared with the FBI pertains to the subject of the post.