

# Trump adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner under investigation in probe of Russia ties

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The political warfare in Washington has intensified with media reports that Jared Kushner, a senior White House adviser and President Donald Trump's son-in-law, is among those being investigated by the FBI and special counsel Robert Mueller for possible collusion between the Trump presidential campaign and the Russian government.

Kushner was first named by the *Washington Post* and CNN, which went public with the news late Thursday, sparking a wave of similar media reports on Friday. Kushner, among Trump's closest advisers and the husband of his daughter Ivanka, is the first current White House official reported to be a "person of interest" in the probe now led by Mueller, who was appointed special counsel last week.

Mueller headed the FBI for 12 years, under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama. He was succeeded in September of 2013 by James Comey, who was heading the FBI investigation into alleged Russian interference in the US 2016 election and possible Trump campaign collusion until he was summarily fired by Trump on May 9. Trump's action triggered talk of possible obstruction of justice, an impeachable offense.

A week ago Friday, as Trump was leaving on his nine-day foreign trip, the *Washington Post* reported that a current senior administration official had been identified as among those under investigation by the FBI, joining such former Trump associates as fired national security adviser Gen. Michael Flynn, former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, and former campaign advisers Roger Stone and Carter Page. The *Post* listed three current administration officials who had met with Russian officials—Kushner, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—but did not identify which one was being

investigated by the FBI, although the newspaper dropped broad hints pointing to the 36-year-old Kushner.

The fact that the *Post*, which, along with the *New York Times*, has been spearheading the campaign attacking Trump for being too "soft" on Moscow, chose to name Kushner the same day that Trump was meeting with European leaders at the NATO summit in Brussels suggests that the internecine conflict within the American ruling class and state will only intensify when Trump returns to Washington.

Trump's performance at the NATO meeting has been roundly criticized by most of the media because he failed to explicitly affirm US support for Article 5 of the NATO charter, which commits all member states to come to the defense of any state that comes under attack. Instead, he used his remarks at a ceremony at NATO headquarters to denounce alliance leaders for failing to fulfill an agreement that member countries devote two percent of their gross domestic product to military spending.

At the same time, Trump aides in attendance made contradictory statements as to the administration's commitment to maintaining economic sanctions imposed on Russia following the 2014 US-backed right-wing coup in Ukraine and subsequent secession of Crimea from Ukraine to join the Russian Federation.

Kushner and wife Ivanka, who were part of Trump's entourage during his stops in Saudi Arabia, Israel and Rome, flew back to Washington DC on Thursday.

These developments underscore the reactionary character of both factions in the conflict and the absence of any democratic or progressive content to the anti-Trump campaign, which is being led by the Democratic Party. The Democrats have chosen to base their opposition to Trump, who embodies the

gangsterism of the financial oligarchy, not on his brutal assault on social programs and democratic rights, but on his reluctance to continue and intensify the aggressive drive against Russia initiated by the Obama administration.

The same week that Trump released a budget proposal that calls for \$1.7 trillion in social cuts, including the virtual destruction of Medicaid, the government health program for the poor, the Democrats and allied media outlets have continued to focus on his alleged collusion with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This, in turn, is based on claims that Putin hacked Democratic Party emails during the election campaign and gave them to WikiLeaks to publish in order to embarrass Hillary Clinton and tip the election to Trump—claims that have not been backed up by any substantive evidence.

On Thursday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 18-3 for a bill imposing sweeping new sanctions on Iran, Russia's ally in defending the government of Bashar al-Assad against the US-led war for regime-change in Syria. Only two Democrats opposed the war-mongering measure. Later in the meeting, the committee approved a separate measure to expand efforts to counter "Russian propaganda and election interference" in the US and around the world.

This was accompanied by a statement from committee chair Bob Corker (Republican of Tennessee) promising to pass a measure imposing new sanctions against Russia as early as next month. Corker has come under intense pressure from Democrats on the committee to present such a measure, despite pleas from Secretary of State Tillerson to allow more time for negotiations with Moscow.

Senator Ben Cardin, the ranking Democrat on the committee, issued a statement declaring: "I welcome Chairman Corker's commitment that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will mark up a sanctions bill on Russia after the Senate returns from the Memorial Day recess in June, pending a discussion with Secretary Tillerson... and take committee action in time for the bill to move to the Senate floor before the July 4 recess."

According to press reports, Kushner is wanted for questioning concerning meetings he held with Russian officials both during and after the presidential election campaign. The *Post* pointed out that he is not at this

point a "target" of the FBI investigation and is not accused of committing a crime.

Kushner and Sessions, along with Russian Ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak, attended an April 2016 event in Washington where then-candidate Trump gave a speech in which he pledged to seek improved relations with Moscow.

In December of 2016, while Trump was president-elect, Kushner and Flynn met with Kislyak in Trump Tower. Late Friday, the *Washington Post* published an article on the meeting that cited "US officials briefed on intelligence reports" and claimed Kushner and Kislyak had discussed setting up a "secret and secure" communications channel between Moscow and the Trump transition team.

Also last December, Kushner met with Sergei Gorkov, the head of the Russian bank Vnesheconombank, which has been under US sanctions since 2014. That meeting points to the completely corrupt character of the Trump presidency, which has brought the criminality that pervades Wall Street into the White House. Trump officials described the meeting as routine and inconsequential, but the bank described it as a "negotiation" about "promising business lines and sectors."

ABC News reported that the meeting was part of talks "with a number of potential investors" about the development of a skyscraper on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan owned by the Kushner family real estate firm, Kushner Companies.

Kushner had already told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he was prepared to testify regarding his relations with Russian officials, and on Thursday his attorney, Jamie Gorelick, issued a statement saying that he would cooperate with federal investigators as well.



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