

Special Counsel sentencing memo on Flynn increases pressure on Trump

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On Tuesday night, Special Counsel Robert Mueller released a memorandum filed with the US district court in Washington DC laying out his office's recommendation on the sentencing of Michael Flynn.

Repeating several times in the course of the 13-page filing that Flynn had provided "substantial assistance to the government," Mueller recommended a sentence with no jail time. Judge Emmet Sullivan is slated to hand down the sentence for Flynn on December 18.

Flynn is the retired Army lieutenant general and former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency who served for 24 days as President Donald Trump's national security advisor before he was fired in February 2017 for lying to Vice President Mike Pence about his contacts with then-Russian Ambassador to the US Sergey Kislyak.

Flynn pleaded guilty last December to one count of lying to the FBI in connection with the special counsel's investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 elections and possible collusion by the Trump election campaign. He admitted to having given false information about his discussions with Kislyak concerning sanctions imposed by Barack Obama against Russia in the final days of his administration, when Flynn was part of the Trump transition team. He also acknowledged lying about talks with Kislyak urging the Putin government to oppose a UN resolution against Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

In pleading guilty to the single count, Flynn agreed to cooperate with Mueller's investigation.

There was a feverish media buildup in advance of the release of the court document, with speculation that it would provide information about Flynn's statements to Mueller's investigators highly damaging to Trump. Mueller's Russia probe, based on a concocted and unsubstantiated narrative of Russian manipulation of

the election to undermine Hillary Clinton and promote Trump, has been the focal point of a fierce conflict within the ruling class and the state between two equally reactionary factions.

The dominant sections of the intelligence establishment, the Democratic Party and most major media outlets have conducted a McCarthyite-style witch-hunt against Russia and used the Mueller probe to pressure Trump to adopt an even more aggressive policy in Syria and Eastern Europe directed against Moscow. Trump, for his part, has escalated the US offensive against Russia, adding more sanctions, supporting the NATO mobilization on Russia's borders and withdrawing from the INF missile treaty, but has continued to maneuver with Putin in pursuit of his trade war and military buildup against China.

Meanwhile, the Democrats have dropped any opposition to Trump's fascist persecution of immigrants and appealed for bipartisan cooperation on key aspects of his pro-corporate, anti-working class domestic economic and social policy.

In the end, Mueller's sentencing memorandum provided no specific information about the content of Flynn's discussions with federal investigators. However, it indicated that Flynn has cooperated closely with the special counsel's office and federal investigators and provided information that could be damaging to Trump and members of his campaign team and administration, including Donald Trump Jr. and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The heart of the filing, an addendum laying out "the significance and usefulness" of Flynn's cooperation, is heavily redacted, on the grounds that the specifics it presents include "sensitive" information relating to "ongoing investigations." However, it contains assertions that suggest Mueller is gathering information

that could be used to accuse the Trump White House of either collusion with Russian “meddling,” obstruction of justice, or both.

The addendum asserts that Flynn has provided “firsthand information about the content and context of interactions between the transition team and Russian government officials.” It states that Flynn has cooperated with “several” investigations, including, in addition to the Russia probe, a criminal investigation whose content is blacked out and a third investigation whose character is completely concealed by redactions. It also notes that Flynn gave 19 interviews to special counsel investigators or other Justice Department attorneys.

The release of the Flynn document follows last week’s escalation by Mueller in the form of a court appearance by Trump’s former personal lawyer and “fixer,” Michael Cohen. Cohen pleaded guilty to one count of lying to Congress in connection with his negotiations with Russian officials in behalf of Trump’s efforts to build a Trump Tower hotel in Moscow.

In effect accusing Trump of lying, Cohen admitted that he had given false testimony about the hotel talks, which took place during the 2016 election campaign. Cohen said he had continued to hold discussions with Russian officials, including aides to Putin, until June 2016, when Trump had already sewed up the Republican nomination. He also said he had discussed the talks with Trump on several occasions during that period, as well as with Trump family members.

During the campaign and since, Trump has insisted that no talks on the hotel project were held after January 2016, prior to the first Republican primary election, and that neither he nor his family were involved in any such discussions after that time.

The Democrats leapt on Cohen’s confession to claim it established a business motive for Trump to act as Putin’s stooge and gave the Russian president leverage over the future US president.



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