

# ONE THING NOT MENTIONED IN MUELLER REQUESTS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE: THE PUTIN PHONE CALL



Yesterday, three different outlets published versions of the list of stuff Robert Mueller has requested of the White House. The NYT describes Mueller asking for details of the in-person meeting with Russians after Comey's firing, as well as details of Comey and Flynn's firing,

Mueller's office sent a document to the White House that detailed 13 different areas that investigators want more information about. Since then, administration lawyers have been scouring White House emails and asking officials whether they have other documents or notes that may pertain to Mr. Mueller's requests.

One of the requests is about a meeting Mr. Trump had in May with Russian officials in the Oval Office the day after James B. Comey, the F.B. I director, was fired. That day, Mr. Trump met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, and the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey I. Kislyak, along with other Russian officials. The New York Times reported that in the meeting Mr. Trump said that firing Mr. Comey relieved "great pressure" on him.

Mr. Mueller has also requested documents about the circumstances of the firing of Michael T. Flynn, who was Mr. Trump's first national security adviser. Additionally, the special counsel has asked for documents about how the White House responded to questions from The Times about a June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower. That meeting was set up by Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, to get derogatory information from Russians about Hillary Clinton.

WaPo adds communications with Paul Manafort to the list and fleshes out the nature of the requests on Flynn and Comey.

Mueller has requested that the White House turn over all internal communications and documents related to the FBI interview of Flynn in January, days after he took office, as well as any document that discusses Flynn's conversations with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in December. Mueller has also asked for records about meetings then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates held with White House counsel Don McGahn in late January to alert him to Justice Department concerns about Flynn, as well as all documents related to Flynn's subsequent ouster by the White House.

Regarding Comey, Mueller has asked for all documents related to meetings between Trump and Comey while Comey served at the FBI, records of any discussions regarding Comey's firing and any documents related to a statement by then-press secretary Sean Spicer made on the night Comey was fired.

Here's CNN's mostly derivative version.

There's one thing that's not explicitly on this

list (though it might be included in the larger request for details on Flynn's firing): details surrounding the January 28th phone conversation between Trump and Putin, which included a bunch of people who happen to no longer be at the White House.

As a number of Democrats noted in the Sally Yates hearing before Senate Judiciary Committee, the call took place in the immediate wake of Yates' two conversations with Don McGahn about Flynn's potential for compromise by the Russians because of his lies about his conversation with Sergey Kislyak.

HIRONO: Others of my colleagues have mentioned, and you yourself, Mr. Clapper, said that RT is a Russian mouthpiece to spread propaganda. And, of course, we know that General Flynn attended a gala hosted by – or a 10th anniversary gala for RT in December, 2015, where he sat next President Putin and got paid over \$33,000 for that.

Mr. Clapper, given the conversation that Ms. Yates provided to the White House regarding – and this is during the January 26th and 27th timeframe – regarding General Flynn, should he have sat in on the following discussions?

On January 28th, he participated in an hour-long call, along with President Trump, to President Putin. And on February 11th, he participated in a discussion with Prime Minister Abe and the president at Mar-a-Lago to discuss North Korea's missile tests.

Should he – given the – the information that had already been provided by Ms. Yates, should he have participated in these two very specific instances?

In comments on Yates' testimony when it got canceled on March 28, Adam Schiff focused on the possible explanation for why Flynn was kept on,

through that meeting and for 18 days total after Yates' warning to the White House.

In other words, the big question surrounding Flynn's firing seems to have as much to do with why he wasn't fired as why he was, eventually, 18 days after getting notice he was in trouble with DOJ. And the import of including him in that phone call with Putin seems to be a part of that.

Again, that may well be included in the universe of documents on Flynn's firing (I'd love to see Yates' firing in there as well, as the Muslim ban was used as an excuse to fire her just as she was raising concerns about Flynn). But it seems important to learn why Trump felt the need to keep Flynn on even after his communications with the Russians had gotten him in legal trouble.