

# THE FOOTNOTE SHOWS MANAFORT WAS HIDING WILLINGNESS TO REACH OUT TO RUSSIA

*In response to yesterday's server hiccups and in anticipation that Mueller is nowhere near done, we expanded our server capacity overnight. If you think you'll rely on emptywheel reporting on the Mueller probe, please consider a donation to support the site.*

There is now some debate about what this footnote, from George Papadopoulos' plea, means.

On or about May 21, 2016, defendant PAPADOPOULOS emailed another high-ranking Campaign official, with the subject line "Request from Russia to meet Mr. Trump." The email included the May 4 MFA Email and added: "Russia has been eager to meet Mr. Trump for quite sometime and have been reaching out to me to discuss."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The government notes that the official forwarded defendant PAPADOPOULOS's email to another Campaign official (without including defendant PAPADOPOULOS) and stated:

"Let[']s discuss. We need someone to communicate that DT is not doing these trips. It should be someone low level in the campaign so as not to send any signal."

The question is, does this mean the speaker was trying to agree to meetings, but keep it low level to hide the intent to cooperate with Russia, or send a low level person to reject the meeting.

As southpaw has noted, this exchange was actually included in a WaPo post this summer

claiming that Papadopoulos was ignored by the campaign. The two campaign officials involved are ... Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, who were surely shocked to learn Papadopoulos had flipped on them three weeks ago as they pled not guilty today.

Several weeks later, Papadopoulos forwarded the same message from Timofeev to Manafort, the newly named campaign chairman.

"Russia has been eager to meet with Mr. Trump for some time and have been reaching out to me to discuss," the adviser told Manafort.

Manafort reacted coolly, forwarding the email to his associate Rick Gates, with a note: "We need someone to communicate that DT is not doing these trips."

Gates agreed and told Manafort he would ask the campaign's correspondence coordinator to handle it – "the person responding to all mail of non-importance" – to signify this did not need a senior official to respond.

Already, it's clear that whoever shared this content with WaPo was spinning, hiding the context.

But the complaint against Papadopoulos written to support an arrest this July says something different. It shows that on July 14, Papadopoulos wrote Timofeev proposing an August or September meeting in the UK.

On or about July 14, 2016, PAPADOPOULOS emailed Foreign Contact 2 and proposed a "meeting for August or September in the UK (London) with me and my national chairman, and maybe one other foreign policy advisor and you, members of president putin's office and the mfa to hold a day of consultants and to meet one another. It has been approved from

our side.”

That is, less than two months later, Papadopoulos at least claimed that a meeting *including Manafort* had been approved, though not including Trump.

Mind you, back to the plea, by August 15 it was decided just Papadopoulos and an unnamed “another foreign policy advisor to the Campaign” [which WaPo has identified as Sam Clovis] should “make the trip[], if it is feasible.” But it then says that the meeting did not take place.

That’s likely not because at that time, August 15, Manafort was being ousted from the campaign because his corrupt ties to Ukraine (basically, the stuff he got indicted on today) was causing a scandal. Which is to say that particular meeting didn’t happen (though Papadopoulos remained on the campaign and – in Facebook messaging he tried to destroy after meeting with the FBI – remained in contact with his Russian handlers as late as October 1), but it didn’t happen not because Manafort wasn’t game, but because Manafort’s ties to Russia became toxic, precisely the kind of “signal” Manafort was trying to avoid in May.

And the connotation of that May 21 email is important because it shows Manafort’s mindset in the weeks before, on June 9, he met with a Russian lawyer hoping for dirt he likely expected to include stolen Hillary emails.