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US

EXCLUSIVE: A London Meeting Before The Election Aroused George Papadopoulos's Suspicions



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Two months before the 2016 election, George Papadopoulos received a strange request for a meeting in London, one of several the young Trump adviser would be

offered — and he would accept — during the presidential campaign.

The meeting request, which has not been reported until now, came from Stefan Halper, a foreign policy expert and Cambridge professor with connections to the CIA and its British counterpart, MI6.

Halper's September 2016 outreach to Papadopoulos wasn't his only contact with Trump campaign members. The 73-year-old professor, a veteran of three Republican administrations, met with two other campaign advisers, The Daily Caller News Foundation learned.

Papadopoulos now questions Halper's motivation for contacting him, according to a source familiar with Papadopoulos's thinking. That's not just because of the randomness of the initial inquiry but because of questions Halper is said to have asked during their face-to-face meetings in London.

According to a source with knowledge of the meeting, Halper asked Papadopoulos: "George, you know about hacking the emails from Russia, right?"

Papadopoulos told Halper he didn't know anything about emails or Russian hacking, said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign. The professor did not follow up on the line of inquiry.

Halper first contacted Papadopoulos by email. In a Sept. 2, 2016, message sent to Papadopoulos's personal email account, he offered the Trump aide \$3,000 to write a policy paper on issues related to Turkey, Cyprus, Israel and the Leviathan natural gas field. Halper also offered to pay for Papadopoulos's flight and a three-night stay in London.

Papadopoulos accepted the proposal, flew to England, and met with Halper and one of his assistants. He delivered the paper electronically Oct. 2 and received payment days later, according to documents TheDCNF reviewed.

Halper's encounters with Papadopoulos were not the only encounters that the professor had with the Trump campaign.



[Stefan Halper speaks at Wellesley College, Oct. 23, 2013. (YouTube screen capture)]

Halper met campaign foreign policy adviser Carter Page at a July 2016 **symposium** held at Cambridge regarding the upcoming election, Page told TheDCNF. The pair remained in contact for several months.



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Halper also requested and attended a one-on-one meeting with another senior campaign official, TheDCNF learned. That meeting was held a day or two before Halper reached out to Papadopoulos. Halper offered to help the campaign but did

not bring up Papadopoulos, even though he would reach out to the campaign aide a day or two later.

Halper's intentions are unclear, while a source familiar with the investigations into Russian meddling told TheDCNF Halper's name popped up on investigators' radar. There is no indication of any wrongdoing on his part, and it is not clear if he has been in touch with investigators.

Halper's activities are all the more eye-catching because Papadopoulos and Page are central figures in the Russia investigation. Papadopoulos, 30, pleaded guilty in October 2017 to lying to the FBI about contacts he had during the campaign with Russian nationals and a London-based professor with links to the Russian government.

That professor, Joseph Mifsud, told Papadopoulos in April 2016 he learned the Russians had possession of "thousands" of Clinton-related emails. That conversation would later spark the FBI's investigation into Russian interference in the presidential campaign. It is not known whether Papadopoulos told anyone on the Trump campaign about Mifsud's remarks.

Page is also a prominent figure in the investigation due to allegations made against him in the infamous Steele dossier. Page's trip to Moscow in early July 2016 is a central piece of the dossier. Christopher Steele, the author of the Democrat-funded report, alleges Page met secretly with two Kremlin insiders as part of the Trump campaign's collusion effort.

Page attended the Cambridge event Halper set up, four days after that trip to Moscow.

London was a veritable stomping ground for Papadopoulos during the campaign.

In addition to meetings there with Halper and Mifsud, the Chicago native had an

encounter that would serve as the catalyst for the FBI's investigation into Russian meddling.

In May 2016, a month after his meeting with Mifsud, an Israeli embassy official, who Papadopoulos knew, introduced him to Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Alexander Downer.

During a **barroom conversation** at Kensington Gardens, Papadopoulos told Downer about the emails Mifsud mentioned to him, The New York Times **reported** in December 2016.

After WikiLeaks published a trove of stolen DNC emails in July 2016, Australian government officials told the FBI about Downer's interaction with Papadopoulos. The bureau opened its counterintelligence investigation July 31, 2016.



[Alexander Downer, Australia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. (YouTube screen capture/BBC)]

What remains unclear is why Downer sought the meeting with Papadopoulos. Was it to become acquainted with a member of Trump's foreign policy advisory team, or was it an opportunity to gather intelligence?

The latter scenario — of a spy operation — is what Papadopoulos wonders was at play when Halper contacted him before the election. There are no clear connections between Halper and Downer, though the pair **did speak** on the same panel at a 2010 Cambridge seminar.

Papadopoulos and Halper met several times during the London trip, including at the Connaught Hotel and the Travellers Club — a classic 19th century club foreign diplomats and politicians frequent. Halper's research assistant — a Turkish woman named Azra Turk — also met with Papadopoulos. The Connaught Hotel meeting was scheduled for Sept. 13, 2016, and the Travellers Club conclave was two days later.

While discussing the policy paper Papadopoulos was to write, Halper made an out-of-left-field reference to Russians and hacked emails, according to a source with direct knowledge of Papadopoulos's version of events.

Turk contacted Papadopoulos to thank him for attending after the meeting. Papadopoulos delivered the paper through email Oct. 2.

Neither Halper nor Turk responded to numerous requests for comment. A phone call placed to a number listed for Halper was answered by a man who claimed Halper was not available. A message left with the man was not returned. Halper also did not reply to a detailed list of questions about his interactions with Trump campaign advisers.

Halper's resume provides mixed clues about why he might have reached out to Papadopoulos.

On one hand, he worked on several geopolitical policy projects as a contractor for the Department of Defense's Office of Net Assessment, the Pentagon's in-house think tank. Federal records show he has been paid \$928,800 since 2012 on four separate research projects.

At the time of the Papadopoulos meeting, Halper was working on a project related to China and Russia's economic relations. There are no public records of Halper releasing reports on Turkey, Cyprus and Israel.

Fitting with Papadopoulos's theory of Halper's outreach is the professor's longstanding connections to both British and American intelligence agency officials. He **also worked** at the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of

Justice, and in three presidential administrations.

Halper is a close associate of Sir Richard Dearlove — the former MI6 chief.

In December 2016, Halper, Dearlove and espionage historian Peter Morland **made international news** when they announced they were leaving an organization called the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar due to concerns Russian operatives had infiltrated the group.

Months earlier, in early fall 2016, Dearlove reportedly met with dossier author Steele. Steele sought out Dearlove's advice on how to proceed with information he gathered on Trump's ties to Russia, The Washington Post **reported**. Former MI6 Moscow station chief Steele had been told Trump campaign members were colluding with Kremlin operatives to release emails stolen from the DNC.



[Sir Richard Dearlove, former head of MI6. (YouTube screen capture/BBC)]

Steele's dossier does not mention Papadopoulos, though the former spy was made aware of the Trump campaign aide while he was working on his anti-Trump document. FBI agents asked Steele during an October 2016 meeting in Rome if he was aware of Papadopoulos. Steele did not have information on Papadopoulos, the former spy said.

But Papadopoulos does have at least **one possible connection** to the dossier. During the campaign, Sergei Millian approached him. Millian is a Belarus-born businessman

who was allegedly an unwitting source for some of the most salacious claims in the dossier.

Halper also had connections to the CIA — most notably through his late father-in-law, Ray Cline.

Cline once served as director of the CIA's bureau of intelligence and research. He was also the agency's top analyst during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Halper **got a job** as foreign policy director on George H.W. Bush's unsuccessful 1980 presidential primary bid on Cline's recommendation.

Halper, who has a residence in Virginia, was also allegedly in charge of a team of former CIA analysts who kept tabs on the Jimmy Carter campaign.

In an ironic twist given the Russia probe's focus on election meddling, Halper was also linked to a Reagan-era scandal dubbed "Briefing-gate."

Halper was one of several Reagan White House officials **linked** to the scandal, which involved campaign briefing materials stolen from Carter's campaign. Prior to the 1980 election, stolen Carter-campaign briefing papers containing classified information ended up in the hands of Reagan's campaign officials.

The theft was not revealed until 1983. Halper was not directly implicated in stealing the documents, but **he was identified** as one of the campaign advisers who handled and disseminated them.

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