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National Security

FBI has questioned Trump campaign adviser Carter Page at length in Russia probe



Carter Page, a former foreign policy adviser of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, speaks at a news conference in Moscow, Dec. 12, 2016. (Pavel Golovkin/AP)

By **Devlin Barrett** June 26 at 4:41 PM

FBI agents have repeatedly questioned former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page about his contacts with Russians and his interactions with the Trump campaign, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Over a series of five meetings in March, totaling about 10 hours of questioning, Page repeatedly denied wrongdoing

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when asked about allegations that he may have acted as a kind of go-between for Russia and the Trump campaign, according to a person familiar with Page’s account.

The interviews with the FBI are the most extensive known questioning of a potential suspect in the probe of possible Russian connections to associates of President Trump. The questioning of Page came more than a month before the Russian investigation was put under the direction of Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

Page confirmed Monday that the interviews occurred, calling them “extensive discussions.” He declined to say if he’s spoken to investigators since the March interviews.

He said the FBI agents “acknowledged that I’m a loyal American veteran but indicated that their management was concerned that I did not believe the conclusions” of a Jan 6. U.S. intelligence report describing Russian government interference in the U.S. election. “Our frank and open conversations gave me confidence that there are still logical, honest individuals at the Bureau who respect civil rights and the Constitution,” he said.

As he has for months, Page said the accusations against him are lies spread by supporters of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, aimed at weakening the Trump administration.

Because it is against the law for an individual to lie to FBI agents about a material issue under investigation, many lawyers recommend their clients not sit for interviews with the bureau without a lawyer present. Page said he spoke without a lawyer and wasn’t concerned about the risks because he told the truth.



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In April, The Washington Post [reported](#) Page had been the subject of a foreign intelligence surveillance court order beginning in the summer of 2016.

Spokesmen for the FBI and the special counsel declined to comment.

The probes being overseen by Mueller include whether any Trump associates conspired with agents of the Russian government to interfere with the U.S. election, whether associates of the president may have engaged in financial crimes or other wrongdoing, and whether the president may have attempted to obstruct justice in the probe of one or more of his associates, according to officials familiar with the investigation.

The FBI's questioning of Page came during a tumultuous time for Trump and the Russia probe. On March 20, Comey publicly confirmed that the FBI was investigating "the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian government, and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia's efforts."

A few days after that statement to Congress, Trump separately asked Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers to publicly deny the existence of any evidence of collusion between Trump and the Russians, according to officials. Coats and Rogers refused to comply with the requests, which they both deemed to be inappropriate, according to two current and two former officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private communications with the president.

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Over a four-week period in March, Page met repeatedly with FBI agents, who pressed him on claims made in a secret dossier compiled by a former British intelligence officer, according to people familiar with the probe.

The dossier includes accusations that Page was part of a “well-developed conspiracy of cooperation between (Trump associates) and the Russian leadership.” The dossier also claimed that in July 2016 Page met with Putin associate Igor Sechin and senior Kremlin official Igor Divyekin. Page has denied all the accusations, saying he did not meet with Sechin and never heard of Divyekin until the dossier surfaced in January.

Page was one of the first Americans to come under scrutiny in the FBI’s Russia investigation, and it’s unclear what, if any, new information was gleaned from the FBI interviews. He has called the government surveillance of his communications a violation of his civil rights. Page has been outspoken in denying the allegations, repeatedly calling the investigation a politically motivated witch hunt.

A decade ago, Page worked in Russia for Merrill Lynch, and in 2016 he raised eyebrows among U.S. foreign policy experts when he criticized U.S. sanctions on Russia, and urged better relations between the two countries. In March 2016, Trump named him as a foreign policy adviser to his campaign, but the campaign dropped him in September after questions arose about his ties to Russia. Trump officials have repeatedly said he was not an influential figure in the campaign. Page has said that while he spent many hours in Trump campaign headquarters, he never briefed Trump.

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Devlin Barrett writes about national security, homeland security and counterterrorism for The Post. He joined the newspaper in 2017 after 15 years with The Wall Street Journal and the AP. His first newspaper job was as a copy boy at the New York Post, and has covered law enforcement – from local cops to global manhunts – for more than 20 years. [Follow @DevlinBarrett](#)



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