

On June 9, 2016, Sater sent Cohen a notice that he (Sater) was completing the badges for the Forum, adding, “Putin is there on the 17th very strong chance you will meet him as well.”³⁷⁰ On June 13, 2016, Sater forwarded Cohen an invitation to the Forum signed by the Director of the Roscongress Foundation, the Russian entity organizing the Forum.³⁷¹ Sater also sent Cohen a Russian visa application and asked him to send two passport photos.³⁷² According to Cohen, the invitation gave no indication that Peskov had been involved in inviting him. Cohen was concerned that Russian officials were not actually involved or were not interested in meeting with him (as Sater had alleged), and so he decided not to go to the Forum.³⁷³ On June 14, 2016, Cohen met Sater in the lobby of the Trump Tower in New York and informed him that he would not be traveling at that time.³⁷⁴

ii. Candidate Trump’s Opportunities to Travel to Russia

The investigation identified evidence that, during the period the Trump Moscow project was under consideration, the possibility of candidate Trump visiting Russia arose in two contexts.

First, in interviews with the Office, Cohen stated that he discussed the subject of traveling to Russia with Trump twice: once in late 2015; and again in spring 2016.³⁷⁵ According to Cohen, Trump indicated a willingness to travel if it would assist the project significantly. On one occasion, Trump told Cohen to speak with then-campaign manager Corey Lewandowski to coordinate the candidate’s schedule. Cohen recalled that he spoke with Lewandowski, who suggested that they speak again when Cohen had actual dates to evaluate. Cohen indicated, however, that he knew that travel prior to the Republican National Convention would be impossible given the candidate’s preexisting commitments to the Campaign.³⁷⁶

Second, like Cohen, Trump received and turned down an invitation to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. In late December 2015, Mira Duma—a contact of Ivanka Trump’s from the fashion industry—first passed along invitations for Ivanka Trump and candidate Trump from Sergei Prikhodko, a Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.³⁷⁷ On January 14, 2016, Rhona Graff sent an email to Duma stating that Trump was “honored to be asked to participate in the highly prestigious” Forum event, but that he would “have to decline” the invitation given his “very grueling and full travel schedule” as a presidential candidate.³⁷⁸ Graff

³⁷⁰ FS00018 (6/9/16 Text Messages, Sater & Cohen).

³⁷¹ 6/13/16 Email, Sater to Cohen (2:10 p.m.).

³⁷² FS00018 (6/13/16 Text Message, Sater to Cohen (2:20 p.m.)); 6/13/16 Email, Sater to Cohen.

³⁷³ Cohen 9/12/18 302, at 6-8.

³⁷⁴ FS00019 (6/14/16 Text Messages, Cohen & Sater (12:06 and 2:50 p.m.)).

³⁷⁵ Cohen 9/12/18 302, at 2.

³⁷⁶ Cohen 9/12/18 302, at 7.

³⁷⁷ 12/21/15 Email, Mira to Ivanka Trump (6:57 a.m.) (attachments); TRUMPORG_16_000057 (1/7/16 Email, I. Trump to Graff (9:18 a.m.)).

³⁷⁸ 1/14/16 Email, Graff to Mira.

asked Duma whether she recommended that Graff “send a formal note to the Deputy Prime Minister” declining his invitation; Duma replied that a formal note would be “great.”³⁷⁹

It does not appear that Graff prepared that note immediately. According to written answers from President Trump,³⁸⁰ Graff received an email from Deputy Prime Minister Prikhodko on March 17, 2016, again inviting Trump to participate in the 2016 Forum in St. Petersburg.³⁸¹ Two weeks later, on March 31, 2016, Graff prepared for Trump’s signature a two-paragraph letter declining the invitation.³⁸² The letter stated that Trump’s “schedule has become extremely demanding” because of the presidential campaign, that he “already ha[d] several commitments in the United States” for the time of the Forum, but that he otherwise “would have gladly given every consideration to attending such an important event.”³⁸³ Graff forwarded the letter to another executive assistant at the Trump Organization with instructions to print the document on letterhead for Trump to sign.³⁸⁴

At approximately the same time that the letter was being prepared, Robert Foresman—a New York-based investment banker—began reaching out to Graff to secure an in-person meeting with candidate Trump. According to Foresman, he had been asked by Anton Kobyakov, a Russian presidential aide involved with the Roscongress Foundation, to see if Trump could speak at the Forum.³⁸⁵ Foresman first emailed Graff on March 31, 2016, following a phone introduction brokered through Trump business associate Mark Burnett (who produced the television show *The Apprentice*). In his email, Foresman referenced his long-standing personal and professional expertise in Russia and Ukraine, his work setting up an early “private channel” between Vladimir Putin and former U.S. President George W. Bush, and an “approach” he had received from “senior Kremlin officials” about the candidate. Foresman asked Graff for a meeting with the candidate, Corey Lewandowski, or “another relevant person” to discuss this and other “concrete things” Foresman felt uncomfortable discussing over “unsecure email.”³⁸⁶ On April 4, 2016, Graff forwarded Foresman’s meeting request to Jessica Macchia, another executive assistant to Trump.³⁸⁷

³⁷⁹ 1/15/16 Email, Mira to Graff.

³⁸⁰ As explained in Volume II and Appendix C, on September 17, 2018, the Office sent written questions to the President’s counsel. On November 20, 2018, the President provided written answers to those questions through counsel.

³⁸¹ Written Responses of Donald J. Trump (Nov. 20, 2018), at 17 (Response to Question IV, Part (e)) (“[D]ocuments show that Ms. Graff prepared for my signature a brief response declining the invitation.”).

³⁸² Written Responses of Donald J. Trump (Nov. 20, 2018), at 17 (Response to Question IV, Part (e)); *see also* TRUMPORG_16_000134 (unsigned letter dated March 31, 2016).

³⁸³ TRUMPORG_16_000134 (unsigned letter).

³⁸⁴ TRUMPORG_16_000133 (3/31/16 Email, Graff to Macchia).

³⁸⁵ Foresman 10/17/18 302, at 3-4.

³⁸⁶ *See* TRUMPORG_16_00136 (3/31/16 Email, Foresman to Graff); *see also* Foresman 10/17/18 302, at 3-4.

³⁸⁷ *See* TRUMPORG_16_00136 (4/4/16 Email, Graff to Macchia).

With no response forthcoming, Foresman twice sent reminders to Graff—first on April 26 and again on April 30, 2016.³⁸⁸ Graff sent an apology to Foresman and forwarded his April 26 email (as well as his initial March 2016 email) to Lewandowski.³⁸⁹ On May 2, 2016, Graff forwarded Foresman’s April 30 email—which suggested an alternative meeting with Donald Trump Jr. or Eric Trump so that Foresman could convey to them information that “should be conveyed to [the candidate] personally or [to] someone [the candidate] absolutely trusts”—to policy advisor Stephen Miller.³⁹⁰

No communications or other evidence obtained by the Office indicate that the Trump Campaign learned that Foresman was reaching out to invite the candidate to the Forum or that the Campaign otherwise followed up with Foresman until after the election, when he interacted with the Transition Team as he pursued a possible position in the incoming Administration.³⁹¹ When interviewed by the Office, Foresman denied that the specific “approach” from “senior Kremlin officials” noted in his March 31, 2016 email was anything other than Kobyakov’s invitation to Roscongress. According to Foresman, the “concrete things” he referenced in the same email were a combination of the invitation itself, Foresman’s personal perspectives on the invitation and Russia policy in general, and details of a Ukraine plan supported by a U.S. think tank (EastWest Institute). Foresman told the Office that Kobyakov had extended similar invitations through him to another Republican presidential candidate and one other politician. Foresman also said that Kobyakov had asked Foresman to invite Trump to speak after that other presidential candidate withdrew from the race and the other politician’s participation did not work out.³⁹² Finally, Foresman claimed to have no plans to establish a back channel involving Trump, stating the reference to his involvement in the Bush-Putin back channel was meant to burnish his credentials to the Campaign. Foresman commented that he had not recognized any of the experts announced as Trump’s foreign policy team in March 2016, and wanted to secure an in-person meeting with the candidate to share his professional background and policy views, including that Trump should decline Kobyakov’s invitation to speak at the Forum.³⁹³

2. George Papadopoulos

George Papadopoulos was a foreign policy advisor to the Trump Campaign from March

³⁸⁸ See TRUMPORG_16_00137 (4/26/16 Email, Foresman to Graff); TRUMPORG_16_00141 (4/30/16 Email, Foresman to Graff).

³⁸⁹ See TRUMPORG_16_00139 (4/27/16 Email, Graff to Foresman); TRUMPORG_16_00137 (4/27/16 Email, Graff to Lewandowski).

³⁹⁰ TRUMPORG_16_00142 (5/2/16 Email, Graff to S. Miller); *see also* TRUMPORG_16_00143 (5/2/16 Email, Graff to S. Miller) (forwarding March 2016 email from Foresman).

³⁹¹ Foresman’s contacts during the transition period are discussed further in Volume I, Section IV.B.3, *infra*.

³⁹² Foresman 10/17/18 302, at 4.

³⁹³ Foresman 10/17/18 302, at 8-9.