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Top U.S. Security Adviser Accused of Discussing Sanctions with Moscow Before Trump Inauguration - Reports

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National Security Adviser Michael Flynn speaks during the daily news briefing at the White House, in Washington. **Carolyn Kaster / AP**

A top security official has been accused of revealing potential U.S. policy changes to Moscow before the official inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

U.S. security adviser Michael Flynn allegedly discussed anti-Russia sanctions with Sergei Kislyak, Moscow's ambassador to the United States, before President Trump took office.

Nine former and current government sources told The Washington Post newspaper that conversations between the officials had "explicitly" mentioned ongoing U.S. sanctions, despite official White House denials.

Some raised concerns that the talks could have led Moscow to believe that sanctions put in

place by President Barack Obama would be lifted under the new administration.

Two sources told the newspaper that Flynn had urged Russian officials not to overreact to Obama's decision to expel Russian diplomats from the country in December 2016. The former president made the move after accusing the Kremlin of interfering in the U.S. elections. President Putin refused to retaliate and instead invited the children of U.S. diplomats in Russia to spend the New Years' holidays at the Kremlin.

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Flynn told journalists on Wednesday that he not discussed sanctions with Kislyak. On Thursday, his official spokesperson instead claimed that "while [Flynn] had no recollection of discussing sanctions, he couldn't be certain that the topic never came up." He said that the pair had discussed Trump's upcoming phone call with President Putin, and the murder of Russia's ambassador in Turkey.

Kislyak also confirmed that he spoke with Flynn by text message, but refused to say whether sanctions had been discussed. He said that their conversations had simply been "something all diplomats do."

Flynn has previously been criticised for his closes ties to Moscow, having appeared at a gala dinner in Moscow with President Putin in 2015. The official maintained that he had been paid to attend the event as a speaker.

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