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Russian Embassy Hedges on Pre-Election Meetings With Trump Attorney General Sessions

By Katie Marie Davies

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U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions **Alex Brandon / AP**

The Russian embassy in Washington has refused to confirm or deny meeting with current U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions in the run-up to the country's presidential elections.

The embassy said that they would not comment on the claims, but confirmed that they had numerous meetings with partners in the United States.

Embassy press secretary Nikolai Lakhonin said that meetings were held on "a daily basis in accordance with diplomatic practice," the Interfax news agency reported.

The U.S. Department of Justice confirmed on Wednesday that Sessions, a vocal supporter of U.S. President Donald Trump during his campaign, had met with Russian Ambassador Sergey

Kislyak before the U.S. presidential election in November 2016.

The admission followed a report in U.S. newspaper The Washington Post that Sessions had met Kislyak in September when he was still the senator of Alabama.

Sessions then failed to disclose the meetings when questioned under oath by the U.S. Congress on potential ties between Trump and the Kremlin.

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The attorney general did not deny meeting with Kislyak but said that the pair had not discussed any issues related to the election.

"I never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign," he said in a statement on Wednesday night. "I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false."

Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova also played down the gravity of the Sessions' contact with Kislyak. "CNN says that the Russian ambassador in the United States as seen by U.S. Special forces as a top Russian spy and recruiter," she wrote on Facebook. "What do you think? A new media low, or can they fall even further?"

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The revelations place greater pressure on U.S. President Donald Trump, who is already facing claims that his campaign was in "constant touch" with Russian officials before the election. The Kremlin has been accused by U.S. intelligence agents of trying to meddle in the elections by launching cyber-attacks designed to discredit Trump's presidential rival, Hillary Clinton.

The New York Times and CNN published reports claiming that top Trump aides were in contact with senior Russian intelligence agents prior to the elections.

Government sources told CNN that "communications between campaign staff and representatives of foreign governments were not unusual," the calls had stood out due to the officials' high-ranking status in the Trump team.

U.S. National Security Advisor Michael Flynn resigned earlier this month following allegations that he secretly discussed sanctions with Russia's ambassador to Washington before the Trump administration came to power.

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