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Blackwater Founder Erik Prince to Appear Before Russia-Trump Probe

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Erik Prince / Bloomberg

(Bloomberg) — Erik Prince, the founder of the Blackwater private security firm and a presence during Trump's presidential transition, is scheduled to appear next week before the House Intelligence Committee as part of its probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. election.

A notice posted on a House website said the meeting will be held on Nov. 30 behind closed doors, as an "open hearing in a closed setting," which means a transcript will be released several days later.

Prince offered advice to Trump during the transition, according to people familiar with his activities. He worked in part with Michael Flynn, who was later fired from his post as national security adviser. Prince is best known for running a company whose employees were convicted of killing Iraqi citizens, including children, in a 2007 gun battle in Baghdad.

The exact nature of the panel's interest in Prince wasn't stated, but the Washington Post

reported in April that the United Arab Emirates arranged a meeting in January in the Seychelles between Prince and a Russian close to President Vladimir Putin as part of a possible effort to establish back-channel communications.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, which is conducting its own probe into Russian meddling, has also signaled interest in Prince. In a letter to Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner, Senators Chuck Grassley and Dianne Feinstein asked for any communications related to Flynn containing references to Prince.

On the same day that Prince is set to appear, the committee is also scheduled to hear from Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who advised Trump during the campaign, according to two people familiar with the matter. Sessions faced tough questions last week before the House Judiciary Committee over whether he misled Congress on the campaign's contacts with Russians.

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