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Flynn Plea Deal Is 'Utterly Absurd,' Says Kremlin

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Michael Flynn (Gage Skidmore/ Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0))

The Kremlin on Monday said the claim that former national security adviser Michael Flynn influenced Putin's decision not to retaliate against new sanctions last year was "utterly absurd."

Flynn pleaded guilty on Friday to lying to the FBI about his conversations with Russia's ambassador to the United States Sergey Kislyak in the weeks leading up to U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration. The charges came as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Speaking in court as part of his plea agreement, Flynn said Trump's team directed him to contact Russians, including former Ambassador Sergei Kislyak.

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"Flynn could not have asked [Kislyak] for anything," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by state-run RIA Novosti news agency Monday.

"Moreover, these requests could not have been passed to the Russian president."

The decision to not respond to U.S. sanctions in December was made by Russian President Vladimir Putin alone, Peskov said.

"The president makes absolutely independent decisions, guided exclusively by Russia's national interests."

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