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Trump Signed Off on Moscow Project During Campaign, Says Giuliani

By Reuters

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Donald Trump / Gage Skidmore / Flickr

U.S. President Donald Trump's lawyer on Wednesday said Trump had signed an October 2015 letter of intent to develop a real estate project in Russia during his presidential campaign, after earlier denying it in a weekend television interview.

Rudy Giuliani had told CNN on Sunday that "no one signed" the letter of intent to go forward with the Moscow project, although he acknowledged talks about the development had extended through November 2016 when Trump won the U.S. presidential election.

Giuliani reversed course in comments to Reuters on Wednesday, however, after CNN reported late on Tuesday that it had obtained a copy of the Oct. 28, 2015 letter signed byTrump, who had announced his White House bid in June that year.

"If I said it, I made a mistake," Giuliani said of his previous denial

about Trump having signed the letter.

"There's nothing wrong with his signing it. When he did it, he wasn't president yet."

The letter was also signed by Andrei Rozov, who owns Russia-based I.C. Expert Investment Co, CNN said. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The proposed project has become a focus in federal investigations into Russian interference in American politics and potential ties between Trump's campaign and Moscow being conducted by the U.S. Special Counsel's Office and Congress.

Trump's personal lawyer Michael Cohen was sentenced last week to three years in prison in part for lying to U.S. lawmakers about the planned Moscow development.

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Any plans to work with Moscow could be seen as a conflict of interest for someone seeking to represent the United States. Trump, a real estate developer and former reality television star, still owns the Trump Organization but said he would step away from day-to-day management after taking office.

Trump did not publicly disclose the project during his campaign, saying he had nothing to do with Russia and calling for warmer ties with America's old Cold War foe.

Last month, Trump told reporters at the White House he pursued the Moscow project during his campaign but decided not to follow through with it. "There would have been nothing wrong if I did do it," he added.

Asked about U.S. prosecutors' assertions that his associates met or had business dealings with Russians before the election, Trump told Reuters this month: "The stuff you're talking about is peanut stuff."

The planned real estate project included condominiums, a hotel and commercial property, CNN reported.

The Trump Organization had also floated the possibility of offering a $50 million penthouse suite to Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to a recent report by Buzzfeed, which reported in May that Trump had signed the letter.

Trump has denied any collusion and raised doubts about U.S. intelligence findings that concluded Russia sought to interfere in the 2016 election. Russia has also denied any meddling.

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