

'Don't Meddle in U.S. Elections,' Trump Tells a Smiling Putin

By [Reuters](#)

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Kremlin.ru

President Donald Trump on Friday sardonically asked his Russian counterpart to please not meddle in U.S. elections, appearing to make light of a scandal that led to an investigation of his campaign's contact with the Kremlin during 2016 elections.

Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin were speaking to reporters in Osaka, Japan, ahead of their first formal face-to-face meeting since a controversial high-profile summit in Helsinki last July.

Asked by a reporter whether he would raise the issue during their meeting, held on the sidelines of a Group of 20 (G20) summit, Trump said: "Yes, of course I will," drawing a laugh from Putin.

Trump then turned to Putin to give the directive twice, as he pointed a finger at the Russian

leader.

"Don't meddle in the election, please," Trump said.

Embed:

«Они спрашивают, вы сказали что-нибудь про вмешательство в выборы?»: Главный вопрос, который волнует американских журналистов на встрече Путина и Трампа pic.twitter.com/77UZckkcjV

— Дмитрий Смирнов (@dimsmirnov175) [June 28, 2019](#)

Relations between the two countries have been sour for years, worsening after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian war.

In a recent television interview, Putin said that relations between Moscow and Washington were "getting worse and worse."

For his part, Trump has sought better relations with Putin to tackle a host of issues, including his goal to rein in North Korea's nuclear ambitions. On Friday, he emphasized the positive.

"It's a great honor to be with President Putin," he told reporters. "We have many things to discuss, including trade and including some disarmament."

'Positive things'

Trump and Putin had been scheduled to meet at the end of November at the last G20 in Buenos Aires, but Trump canceled the meeting as he flew to Argentina, citing Russia's seizure of Ukrainian navy ships and sailors. The two spoke informally at the event, and at a lunch in Paris earlier that month.

Related article: [Putin Says Relations Between Russia and U.S. are Getting 'Worse and Worse'](#)

In May, they had their first extensive phone conversation in months. Trump said they talked about a new accord to limit nuclear arms that could eventually include China.

"We've had great meetings. We've had a very, very good relationship," Trump said on Friday. "And we look forward to spending some very good time together. A lot of very positive things going to come out of the relationship."

Trump's critics have accused him of being too friendly with Putin and castigated him for failing to publicly confront the Russian leader in Helsinki over Moscow's meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

A U.S. special counsel, Robert Mueller, conducted a two-year investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and whether the Trump campaign colluded with

Moscow.

Mueller found that Russia did meddle in the election but that the Trump campaign did not illegally conspire with Russia to influence the vote.

In a further attempt to lighten the mood, Trump sought common ground with Putin at the expense of the journalists who had gathered to catch the leaders at the outset of their meeting.

"Get rid of them. Fake news is a great term, isn't it. You don't have this problem in Russia but we do," Trump said.

To which Putin responded, in English: "We also have. It's the same."

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