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NATIONAL SECURITY

Mike Flynn Didn't Report 2014 Interaction With Russian-British National

Meeting at a U.K. dinner occurred when he was head of the Defense Intelligence Agency



Mike Flynn at a White House joint news conference in February, when he was national security adviser. PHOTO: CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

By **CAROL E. LEE, ROB BARRY, SHANE HARRIS** and **CHRISTOPHER S. STEWART**

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WASHINGTON—Former national security adviser Mike Flynn interacted with a graduate student with dual Russian and British nationalities at a 2014 U.K. security conference, a contact that came to the notice of U.S. intelligence but that Mr. Flynn, then the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, didn't disclose, according to people familiar with the matter.

Mr. Flynn met Svetlana Likhova at the Cambridge Intelligence Seminar, a gathering of former intelligence officials hosted at Cambridge University, in February 2014. Ms. Likhova at the time was a graduate student studying the history of Russian intelligence, according to two people who attended the event.

There is no record showing that Mr. Flynn reported his interaction with Ms. Likhova to security officials in the Defense Department, said a former senior U.S. official with knowledge of the matter. As the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is part of the Pentagon and the military's largest intelligence organization, Mr. Flynn was expected to notify officials about any contacts with foreigners he didn't know, particularly from an adversary nation such as Russia, the former official said.

The rules on "self-reporting" of such contacts aren't iron-clad, but officials at Mr. Flynn's level of security clearance are generally instructed to view approaches by foreign strangers as a possible attempt to gain sensitive information or even recruit a senior official on behalf of a foreign government.

"A senior official like him definitely ought to be expected to detect that and report it," the former official said, adding that people who have worked in intelligence as long as Mr. Flynn are "indoctrinated to report any anomalous behavior that you detect."

Dan O'Brien, who at the time was the chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency's liaison office in London and also attended the event, said there were about 20 graduate students there, including Ms. Lokhova.

Mr. O'Brien said there was nothing that struck him as improper or that would have prompted him to discuss the interaction with other DIA officials. "Nothing rose to the level," he said. Mr. O'Brien said he wasn't aware of any other interactions between the two.

"This is a false story," said Price Floyd, a spokesman for Mr. Flynn, in response to questions about the interactions between Mr. Flynn and Ms. Lokhova and why Mr. Flynn didn't report those interactions to DIA officials.

"The inference that the contact between Gen. Flynn and a Russian national described in this story should be seen in any light other than incidental contact is simply untrue," he said.

Ms. Lokhova declined to comment. Her partner, David North, confirmed Ms. Lokhova met Mr. Flynn at the event at which they "had a 20-minute public conversation," but said the two "have not met or spoke since."

Previously, Ms. Lokhova worked for the London branch of Russia's state-controlled Sberbank. A bookseller website for the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair listing proposed books shows one by a Svetlana Lokhova called "The Americans." The pitch: "A Cambridge-based Russian intelligence expert uses archive material to unearth details of Stalin's programme of sending deep cover spies into the U.S."

Then-President Barack Obama appointed Mr. Flynn as head of the DIA. Mr. Flynn then became a key campaign adviser to Donald Trump and became the president's national-security adviser in January. He was forced to resign last month over revelations that he hadn't been truthful to Vice President Mike Pence and other administration officials in describing the nature of conversations Mr. Flynn had with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. last December.

Several U.S. intelligence agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, are conducting a wide-ranging counterintelligence probe into any contacts that Trump campaign personnel may have had with Russian officials, in the wake of intelligence agencies' findings that the Russian government directed hackers who interfered in last year's election by stealing emails, including from the Democratic National Committee. Russia has denied any interference in the election.

It isn't known when Mr. Flynn's contact with Ms. Lokhova at the 2014 meeting came to the attention of U.S. intelligence or whether it is part of the current investigation.

Two people who attended the Cambridge dinner and are associated with the event said that Ms. Lokhova approached Mr. Flynn at the start and that the two sat next to each other.

Without mentioning Ms. Lokhova by name, one of the organizers of the event wrote about the evening in the Times of London last month. Christopher Andrew, who wrote the authorized history of MI-5, Britain's domestic security service, described a woman of dual British-Russian citizenship who showed Mr. Flynn a number of historic Russian documents, including an "erotic postcard" that Joseph Stalin sent to a young woman in 1912.

At the end of the evening, Mr. Andrew wrote that Mr. Flynn asked the woman to travel with him as a translator to Moscow on his next official visit but that the trip never materialized. He said the two continued an email exchange on Russian history after the meeting.

Mr. O'Brien, the former DIA official, said he had no knowledge of any emails between Mr. Flynn and Ms. Likhova.

Mr. Andrew declined to say whether he was referring to Ms. Likhova in his article, though Neil Kent, a Cambridge scholar who also attended, said it was clearly her. "She was the only Russian at the dinner," Mr. Kent said.

An expert on security rules who advises government clients agreed that Mr. Flynn should have at least erred on the side of caution and informed the Defense Department about his contact with Ms. Likhova.

"He certainly knows better," this person said. "The problem is someone in that position," meaning head of an intelligence agency, "could easily make the case that it's impossible for me to report every single contact I have."

Before becoming a formal adviser to Mr. Trump on the campaign, Mr. Flynn was paid tens of thousands of dollars by Russian companies, according to documents obtained by a congressional oversight committee that were released this past week.

Mr. Flynn also recently disclosed that his firm was paid \$530,000 to work in the U.S. on behalf of the interests of the Turkish government. Mr. Flynn had performed those services while he was advising Mr. Trump, then a presidential candidate.

Mr. Flynn was paid \$11,250 each by a Russian air cargo company that had been suspended as a vendor to the United Nations following a corruption scandal, and by a Russian cybersecurity company that was then trying to expand its business with the U.S. government, according to the documents, which were reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Floyd, the Flynn spokesman, said he reported one of his appearances at a Russian event to the DIA, as required. Mr. Floyd said Mr. Flynn gave the other speeches in Washington.

—Gordon Lubold and Michael Rothfeld contributed to this article.

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