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The Plot to Subvert an Election

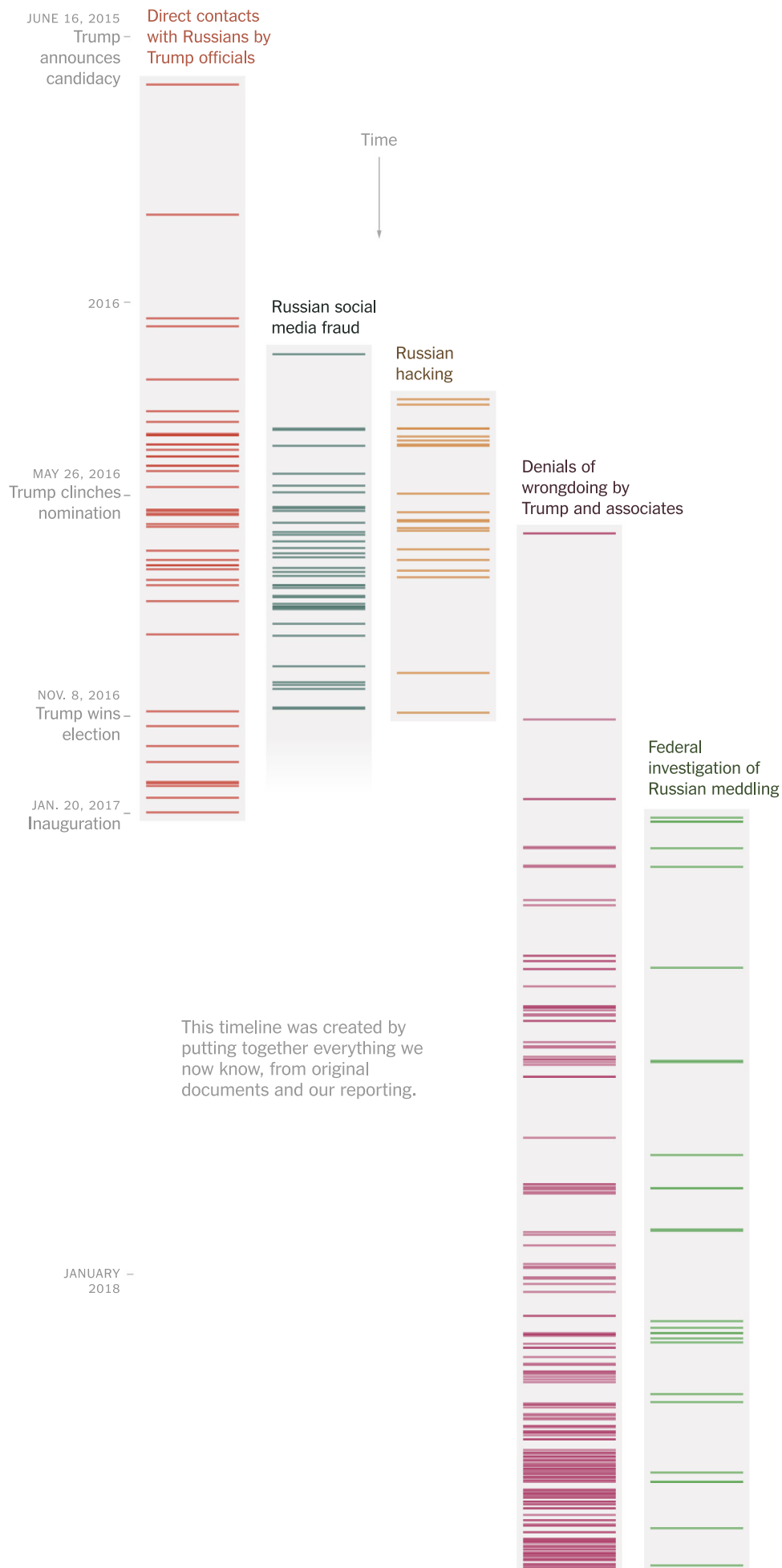
A Timeline Showing the Full Scale of Russia's Unprecedented Interference in the 2016 Election, and Its Aftermath

By KAREN YOURISH LARRY BUCHANAN DEREK WATKINS

SEPT. 20, 2018

It's easy to lose the larger narrative of the [Trump-Russia story](#) given the relentless pace and complexity of the news. Stepping back to view the timeline from beginning to end reveals how these parallel threads — contacts, hacking and social media fraud — often crossed during the election. Campaign aides who denied knowledge of Russian contacts were later revealed to have either known about them or pursued them, though none ever told the F.B.I.

Each line below represents a single event, action or statement.





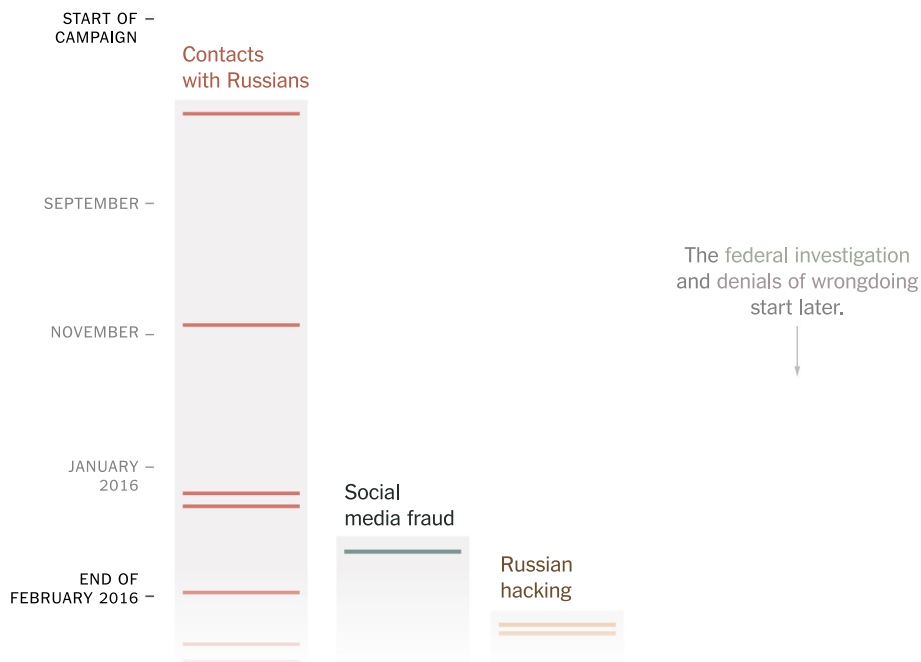
This timeline organizes the complex web of events into parallel threads to show a more complete picture, from the moment Donald J. Trump entered the presidential race to his nearly daily attacks on the Russia investigation as members of his inner circle were charged with crimes.

A [glossary](#) of the people, groups and organizations in the timeline appears at the bottom of this article.

JUNE 2015 TO FEBRUARY 2016

1. Soon After Trump Announces Campaign, His Russian Business Ties Resurface

About a month after Donald J. Trump formally announced his presidential campaign, he received an invitation to go to Moscow for the 60th birthday of Aras Agalarov, a Russian billionaire who co-hosted the Miss Universe pageant with him in 2013. Later that fall, the Trump Organization began to actively pursue a real estate project in Moscow.



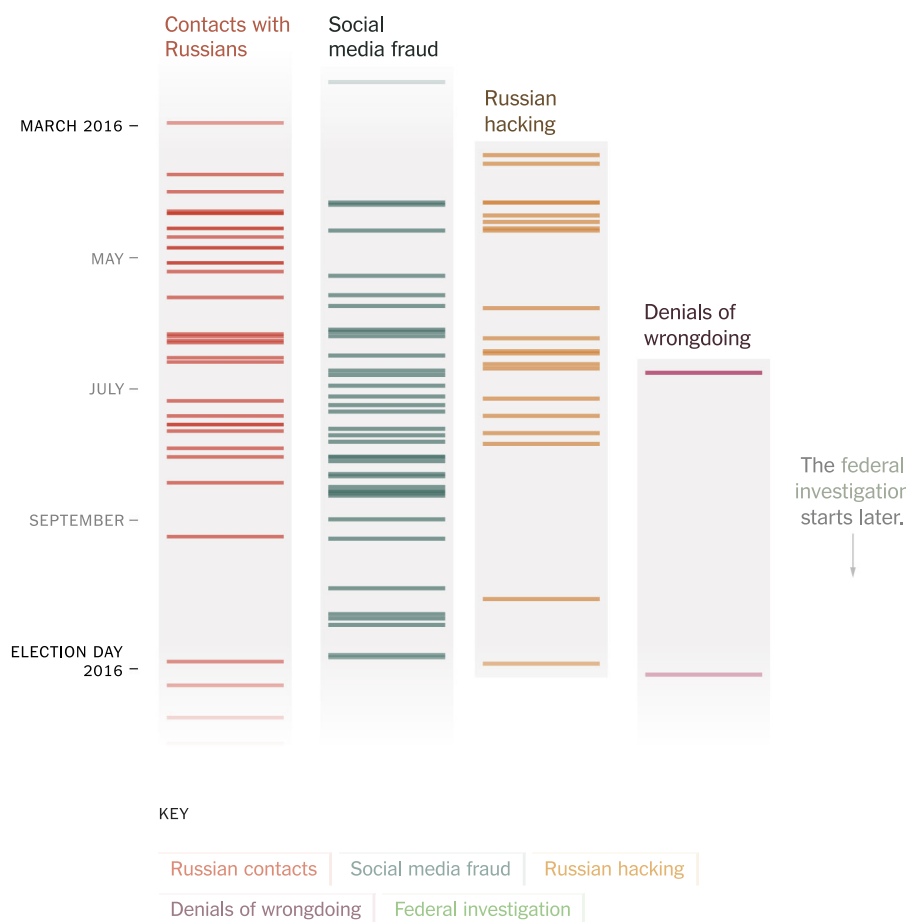
KEY: CHART AND TIMELINE

Lines — correspond to text below: [direct contacts with Russians by Trump officials, such as the Trump Tower meeting on June 9, 2016](#), [social media fraud](#), [Russian hacking](#), [denials of wrongdoing by Trump and his associates](#) and [the federal investigation of Russian meddling.](#)

JUNE 2015 -	JUNE 16 Trump formally announces his presidential campaign. »
JULY 2015 -	<p>JULY 22 About a month later, he is invited to Moscow to celebrate the 60th birthday of Aras Agalarov, a Russian billionaire who co-hosted the 2013 Miss Universe pageant with Trump in Russia.</p> <p>JULY 24 Trump's personal assistant says it is unlikely Trump will be able to make it to the party because of the campaign. Rob Goldstone, the publicist who forwards the invitation, says Agalarov's son Emin might be able to set up a meeting with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia if Trump decides to come.</p>
OCTOBER 2015 -	<p>OCT. 12 Michael D. Cohen, Trump's longtime lawyer, has a series of email exchanges with Felix Sater, a Russian-born businessman and Trump associate, about developing a Trump property in Moscow.</p> <p>OCT. 28 Trump signs a "letter of intent" for a Trump hotel to be built in Moscow. »</p> <p>For more than 30 years, Trump has sought to launch a real estate project in Russia. Perhaps the closest he came was during the early stages of his presidential campaign.</p>
NOVEMBER 2015 -	NOV. 3 In one of his emails to Cohen, Sater predicts that building a Trump Tower in Moscow will help Trump's presidential campaign. "I will get Putin on this program and we will get Donald elected."
DECEMBER 2015 -	DEC. 19 In another, Sater talks about securing financing from a Russian bank under American sanctions.
JANUARY 2016 -	<p>JAN. 14 By January, the Moscow project seems to have stalled. Cohen emails an aide to Putin seeking help to jump-start it.</p> <p>JAN. 19 Donald Trump Jr., Trump's eldest son, receives an email from Goldstone trumpeting his connection to a Russian social media platform and suggesting the campaign use it to appeal to Russian-American voters. The email is also sent to Trump's personal assistant, who connects Goldstone with Dan Scavino, who is in charge of social media for the campaign. Goldstone thanks Trump's personal assistant and adds: "Emin will be in NYC end of January and I am sure would love to stop by."</p> <p>JAN. 20 An executive from the Russian social media company emails Scavino, Trump Jr. and Trump's personal assistant about setting up a page for the Trump campaign.</p>
FEBRUARY 2016 -	<p>FEB. 1 Republican primaries begin.</p> <p>FEB. 10 The Internet Research Agency instructs workers to "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump—we support them)."</p> <p>FEB. 29 Trump receives a letter from Aras Agalarov expressing "great interest" in his "bright electoral campaign."</p>

2. Russian Contacts, Hacking and Fraud Intensify Through the Election

Russians reached out to campaign officials with offers of “dirt” on Hillary Clinton and invitations to back-channel meetings. The top military intelligence service in Russia hacked the Democrats while a network of Russian computer specialists use stolen identities, false personas and fake social media accounts and ads to sow discord and undermine the election.



MARCH 2016 - MARCH 6 George Papadopoulos joins the campaign. He says he was told that a priority of the campaign was a better relationship with Russia. MARCH 14 He meets with a London-based professor who claims to have ties to the Russian government. MARCH 15 Russian hackers begin targeting computer networks of the Democratic National Committee, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and Clinton campaign. MARCH 19 They send a phishing email to John D. Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman and proceed to steal the entire contents of his account —

about 50,000 emails. | MARCH 21 Trump names members of his foreign policy team, including Papadopoulos and Carter Page. | MARCH 24 The professor introduces Papadopoulos to a Russian woman described as Putin's niece (she was not) and they all discuss setting up a meeting between Trump and Putin. | Papadopoulos emails campaign officials about his new Russian contacts. | MARCH 28 Paul Manafort, a veteran Republican strategist, is brought on to the campaign to lead the delegate-wrangling effort.

MARCH 31 Papadopoulos tells Trump, Senator Jeff Sessions and others at a campaign meeting that he can arrange a meeting between Trump and Putin. [»](#)

APRIL 2016 -

APRIL 1 Shortly after he joins the campaign, Page is invited to deliver a commencement address at a prestigious economic school in Moscow. | APRIL 6 A Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee employee opens a link to a fraudulent login page and enters password. | Fake ad: "You know, a great number of black people support us saying that #HillaryClintonIsNotMyPresident." | Russian hackers send spearphishing emails to the accounts of others on the Clinton campaign. | APRIL 7 Fake ad: "I say no to Hillary Clinton / I say no to manipulation." | APRIL 10 Papadopoulos reaches out to the Russian woman. | APRIL 11 Manafort emails Konstantin V. Kilimnik, a longtime Russian associate, to make sure Oleg V. Deripaska, a Russian oligarch close to Putin, knows that he is on the Trump campaign. | Kilimnik confirms Deripaska is aware. | Papadopoulos emails the Russian woman about setting up a trip to Russia. She responds that she is "excited about the possibility of a good relationship" with Trump. | APRIL 12 Russian hackers use stolen credentials to infiltrate the D.C.C.C.'s computer network and install malware. | APRIL 15 They search the network for "hillary," "cruz," and "trump" and copy a folder called "Benghazi Investigations." | APRIL 18 The professor introduces Papadopoulos to Ivan Timofeev, a Russian claiming to connections to the Russian foreign ministry. | Russian hackers break into the D.N.C.'s computers. | Papadopoulos has multiple conversations with Timofeev about setting up a meeting between the campaign and the Russian government. | APRIL 19 Fake ad: "JOIN our #HillaryClintonForPrison2016." | Russian hackers create a fictitious online persona, DCLeaks, to release stolen documents. | APRIL 22 Timofeev thanks Papadopoulos "for an extensive talk" and proposes meeting in London or Moscow. | APRIL 25 Papadopoulos tells Stephen Miller, a top campaign adviser, that Putin wants to meet Trump.

APRIL 26 The professor tells Papadopoulos that the Russians have "dirt" on Clinton in the form of thousands of emails. [»](#)

This occurs about two months before the Russian hacking is publicly revealed and is the first of at least two times the Trump campaign is told Russia has "dirt" on Hillary Clinton.

MAY 2016 -

APRIL 27 Trump briefly meets Sergey I. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the United States, at a reception before his first major foreign policy speech. | Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, also meets Kislyak before the speech. | Papadopoulos emails Miller again. He also emails Corey Lewandowski, the campaign manager, "to discuss Russia's interest in hosting Mr. Trump."

MAY 1 Papadopoulos tells the Australian ambassador to Britain that Russia has dirt on Clinton. [»](#)

This revelation provoked the F.B.I. to open a counterintelligence investigation into the Trump campaign months before the presidential election.

MAY 4 Timofeev says his colleagues from the ministry “are open for cooperation.” Papadopoulos forwards Timofeev’s email to Lewandowski. Manafort meets with Kilimnik. MAY 5 Papadopoulos forwards Timofeev’s email to Sam Clovis, another campaign aide. MAY 8 Timofeev proposes putting Papadopoulos in touch with another Russian official. MAY 10 Fake ad: “Donald wants to defeat terrorism ... Hillary wants to sponsor it.” Rick Dearborn, a campaign aide, receives an email about arranging a back-channel meeting between Trump and Putin. The subject line of the email is “Kremlin Connection.” It is sent from a conservative operative who said Russia wanted to use the National Rifle Association’s convention to make “first contact.” MAY 14 Papadopoulos tells Lewandowski that the Russians are interested in hosting Trump. MAY 16 Page floats the idea with the campaign of Trump going to Russia in his place “to raise the temperature a little bit.”

MAY 16 Dearborn receives a second, similar, proposal, which he forwards to Kushner, Manafort and Rick Gates, a business associate of Manafort’s. Kushner rebuffs the proposal. [»](#)

Both efforts appear to involve Alexander Torshin, a key figure in Mr. Putin’s United Russia party who was instructed to make contact with the Trump campaign. Mr. Torshin met Donald Trump Jr. at a dinner during the N.R.A.’s annual convention a few days later.

MAY 19 Fake ad: “Vote Republican, vote Trump, and support the Second Amendment!” MAY 20 Trump Jr. meets briefly with Torshin and Maria Butina, a Russian later accused of being a covert agent, at an N.R.A.-sponsored dinner. MAY 21 Papadopoulos forwards an email from Timofeev to Manafort, who forwards it to Gates with a note: “We need someone to communicate that DT is not doing these trips.” MAY 24 Fake ad: “Hillary Clinton Doesn’t Deserve the Black Vote.” MAY 25 Thousands of D.N.C. emails are stolen.

MAY 26 Trump clinches the Republican nomination.

JUNE 2016 -

MAY 27 At a rally the next day, he calls Putin “a strong leader.” JUNE 1 Papadopoulos tells Clovis that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked if Trump is interested in visiting Russia.

JUNE 3 Aras Agalarov is told that the Russian government wants to give the Trump campaign damaging information about Clinton. His son, Emin, enlists Goldstone to reach out to Trump Jr. and arrange a meeting. Trump Jr. replies within minutes: “If it’s what you say I love it especially later in the summer.” [»](#)

This is the second time a campaign official was told of “dirt” on Clinton.

JUNE 4 Russian trolls use a fake email account to publicize a June “March for Trump” rally in New York. |

JUNE 5 They also reach out to the Trump campaign for rally signs.

JUNE 6 Clinton becomes the presumptive Democratic nominee.

JUNE 6 Goldstone follows up with Trump Jr. about when he can “talk with Emin by phone about this Hillary info.” |

Trump Jr. calls Emin.

JUNE 7 Trump Jr. calls Emin

again. »

Phone records show Trump Jr. called a blocked number before and after calls to Emin.

JUNE 7 Goldstone tells Trump Jr. that Emin asked him to schedule a meeting “with you and the Russian government attorney who is flying over from Moscow for this Thursday.”

JUNE 7 Trump Jr. confirms the meeting and says Manafort and Kushner are likely to join him. | Trump promises to deliver a major address detailing Clinton’s “corrupt dealings.” »

This statement comes three hours after Trump Jr. confirms the Trump Tower meeting. The speech never happens.

JUNE 7 Fake ad: “Trump is our only hope for a better future!” |

JUNE 8 DCLeaks.com

goes live and posts thousands of stolen emails. |

Trump Jr. forwards the entire email chain with Goldstone to Kushner and Manafort. The subject line is “Russia - Clinton - private and confidential.”

JUNE 9 Trump Tower Russia meeting. »

The Russians nabbed a meeting at Trump Tower with top campaign officials, including the president’s eldest son, after promising damaging information about Clinton.

JUNE 10 Trump receives a birthday gift from the Agalarovs. |

JUNE 14 The D.N.C. breach becomes public. »

JUNE 14 Russian hackers create the Guccifer 2.0 persona to help throw suspicion off Russia. | Goldstone forwards a story about the D.N.C. hacking to Emin and a Russian who attended the meeting, describing the news as “eerily weird” given what they had discussed at Trump Tower. |

JUNE 15 Guccifer 2.0 announces it is releasing

“just a few docs from many thousands I extracted when hacking into DNC’s network.” |

JUNE 16 Trolls use stolen Social Security numbers to open bank and

PayPal accounts. |

JUNE 17 Trump sends a thank you note to Agalarov for the birthday

present. |

JUNE 19 Page emails Lewandowski and Hope Hicks, Trump's spokeswoman, about his upcoming Moscow trip. He also mentions it to Sessions during a dinner in Washington. [»](#)

JUNE 19 Papadopoulos Skypes and emails Timofeev about a campaign official coming to Russia. | Papadopoulos tells Lewandowski he can travel to Russia if Trump cannot. | JUNE 20 Guccifer 2.0: "Hi! I'm on Twitter now! this is my official account!" | JUNE 22 WikiLeaks asks Guccifer 2.0 for the stolen D.N.C. emails. | JUNE 23 Fake Facebook account is used to hire someone to help with a rally. | JUNE 24 Manafort says it is "absurd" to think there are any ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. |

JUNE 24 Trump Jr. says it is "disgusting" and "phony" to suggest that Russia is helping Trump. [»](#) |

His meeting with Russians two weeks earlier would be reported by The Times in July 2017.

JULY 2016 -

JUNE 25 "March for Trump" rally in New York organized by Russians. | JUNE 29 Goldstone emails Scavino about the Russian social media platform, saying he mentioned the idea "to Don and Paul Manafort during a meeting recently." | JUNE 30 Fake ad: "#NeverHillary #HillaryForPrison #Hillary4Prison #HillaryForPrison2016 #Trump2016 #Trump #Trump4President" | JULY 5 Posters with a sham quote attributed to Clinton ordered for "Save American Muslims" rally. | JULY 6 WikiLeaks asks Guccifer 2.0 to send anything "Hillary related" prior to the Democratic National Convention. | JULY 7 Manafort emails Kilimnik and offers to give private briefings to Deripaska. | Page delivers the commencement speech in Moscow. While there, he speaks with a Russian deputy prime minister, who expresses strong support for Trump. He also speaks with the head of investor relations for a Russian energy firm. | JULY 9 Washington, D.C., rally organized by Russians: "Support Hillary. Save American Muslims." | JULY 12 Facebook ads bought for "Down With Hillary" rally. | JULY 14 Guccifer 2.0 sends WikiLeaks instructions for accessing the stolen D.N.C. documents. | Papadopoulos tells Timofeev that "our side" has approved a meeting with Russians. | JULY 18 Kislyak is among a small group of diplomats who chat with Sessions after an event at the Republican National Convention (July 18-21). | Several other campaign officials, including Page, also chat with the Russian ambassador during the convention. | JULY 20 Fake ad: "Ohio Wants Hillary 4 Prison." |

JULY 21 Trump accepts the Republican nomination for president.

JULY 21 Papadopoulos tells Timofeev to "keep an eye" on Trump's acceptance speech. "Should be good." | JULY 22 Days before the Democratic National Convention, WikiLeaks releases nearly 20,000 stolen emails. | JULY 23 New York rally organized by Russians: "Down with Hillary." | JULY 26 Fake Facebook group "United Muslims of America" posts that Muslim voters are "between Hillary Clinton and a hard place." |

JULY 27 Trump: "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing." [»](#) | For the first time, Russian hackers attack accounts at a domain used by Clinton's personal office. |

These events happened on the same day, but it is not known whether the Russians' actions were actually in response to Trump's statement.

AUGUST 2016 - JULY 29 Kilimnik emails Manafort to set up another meeting. AUG. 2 Trolls send message to a real Trump Facebook account about “organizing a YUGE pro-Trump flash mob in every Florida town.” Trolls use stolen identity to send emails to Florida grassroots groups to organize the Florida rallies. Manafort has dinner with Kilimnik in New York. AUG. 4 Fake ad: “Hillary Clinton has already committed voter fraud during the Democrat Iowa Caucus.”

AUG. 8 Over the next couple of months, Roger J. Stone Jr., a longtime Trump adviser, repeatedly claims he is in contact with Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, and seems to foreshadow the release of Podesta’s emails. »

Stone later denies any direct contact with Assange or having advance knowledge of the document dumps.

AUG. 10 Fake ad: “We cannot trust Hillary to take care of our veterans!” AUG. 11 Fake Twitter account posts accusations of voter fraud in North Carolina. AUG. 14 Stone begins a series of relatively benign private messages on Twitter with Guccifer 2.0, whom he says is not a Russian front. AUG. 15 Clovis encourages Papadopoulos to make the trip to Russia. AUG. 16 Trolls use a fake Instagram account to promote the pro-Trump Florida rallies. AUG. 18 Money is wired to a person who is building a cage large enough to hold a Clinton impersonator at a rally. Russians pose as Americans and coordinate with Trump campaign staff members to organize Florida rallies.

AUG. 19 Manafort is ousted from the campaign days after reports disclosed financial dealings with the pro-Russia party of a former Ukrainian president. »

SEPT. 19 Fake persona is used to ask a real Tea Party activist to promote the Florida rallies. AUG. 20 Multiple Florida rallies organized by Russians. AUG. 21 Stone tweets: “Trust me, it will soon [be] the Podesta’s time in the barrel. #CrookedHillary.” AUG. 31 Facebook ads are bought for the New York rally. SEPT. 8 Sessions meets with Kislyak in his Senate office. SEPT. 9 A Clinton impersonator is asked to travel to New York for another rally. SEPT. 20 WikiLeaks sends a direct Twitter message to Trump Jr. He thanks WikiLeaks for the message and emails several top campaign officials, including Steve Bannon, Kellyanne Conway and Kushner to let them know. OCT. 2 Pennsylvania rallies organized by Russians: “Miners for Trump” OCT. 3 WikiLeaks sends another private message to Trump Jr., asking him to push a story about Clinton. Trump Jr. says he’s already pushed the story.

OCT. 7 The Obama administration accuses the Russian government of hacking. » An “Access Hollywood” tape of Trump making lewd remarks about women surfaces. » WikiLeaks posts the first of thousands of Podesta’s emails. »

These three significant events happened within hours of one another on the afternoon of Oct. 7. WikiLeaks then released a new batch of Podesta’s emails every day until the election.

OCT. 10 Trump: “I love WikiLeaks!”

OCT. 12 In another private Twitter message, WikiLeaks asks Trump Jr. if he can ask his father to tweet about the Podesta emails. [»](#) Soon after Trump Jr. receives the message, Trump tweets: “Very little pick-up by the dishonest media of incredible information provided by WikiLeaks. So dishonest! Rigged system!”

Trump seemed to [tweet](#) about the emails 15 minutes after WikiLeaks sent its request to Trump Jr.

OCT. 14 Fake ad: “Among all the candidates Donald Trump is the one and only who can defend the police from terrorists.” | OCT. 16 Instagram account “Woke Blacks” used to encourage people of color not to vote. | OCT. 19 Fake ad: “Hillary is a Satan, and her crimes and lies had proved just how evil she is.”

OCT. 27 Cohen creates a shell company to pay off Stephanie Clifford, the adult film star known as Stormy Daniels who said she had sexual relations with Trump. [»](#)

NOVEMBER 2016 -

NOV. 2 Fake Twitter post: “#VoterFraud by counting tens of thousands of ineligible mail in Hillary votes being reported in Broward County, Florida.” | NOV. 3 An ad by Russian operatives encouraging people to vote for Jill Stein is added on Instagram.

NOV. 5 The Russian social media executive emails Scavino, Trump Jr. and Trump's assistant again to follow up on setting up a page for the Trump campaign.

NOV. 6 WikiLeaks releases a new trove of emails stolen from the D.N.C. [»](#)

On July 13, 2018, the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election issued an indictment of 12 Russian intelligence officers in the hacking of the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton presidential campaign.

NOVEMBER 2016 TO OCTOBER 2017

3. A Head-Spinning Start to the Trump Administration

Russia largely dominated the national political conversation after Mr. Trump was elected. American intelligence agencies concluded that President Vladimir V. Putin personally ordered the campaign to interfere in the election. Questionable transition contacts and accusations of attempts by Mr. Trump to kill the investigation come to light. Mr.