

Trump announces pardon of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn

Flynn plead guilty twice to lying to the FBI about his conversations with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak prior to Trump's inauguration.

President Trump on Wednesday tweeted that he has granted a 'full pardon' to his former national security adviser, retired Army Gen. Michael Flynn, ending a legal saga brought about by special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

"It is my Great Honor to announce that General Michael T. Flynn has been granted a Full Pardon," the president wrote. "Congratulations to @GenFlynn and his wonderful family, I know you will now have a truly fantastic Thanksgiving!"

Donald J. Trump@realDonaldTrump

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The White House later in the day sent out a statement saying that Flynn "should never have been prosecuted" and that the pardon ends "the relentless, partisan pursuit of an innocent man."

"While today's action sets right an injustice against an innocent man and an American hero, it should also serve as a reminder to all of us that we must remain vigilant over those in whom we place our trust and confidence," the statement continued.

Flynn pleaded guilty twice to lying to the FBI about his conversations with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak prior to Trump's inauguration.

Flynn said during his interview with the FBI that he and Kislyak had not discussed sanctions that had just been imposed on Russia for election interference by the outgoing Obama administration.

During that conversation, Flynn urged Kislyak for Russia to be “even-keeled” in response to the punitive measures and assured him “we can have a better conversation” about relations between the two countries after Trump became president.

The conversation alarmed the FBI, which at the time was investigating whether the Trump campaign and Russia had coordinated to sway the election’s outcome. In addition, White House officials were stating publicly that Flynn and Kislyak had not discussed sanctions.

FLYNN CASE JUDGE ISSUES UNUSUAL ORDER TELLING GOVERNMENT TO CERTIFY EVIDENCE IS ‘TRUE AND CORRECT’

However, the prosecution came under scrutiny after the release of FBI documents that suggested a plot to get him to lie.

“What is our goal?” read one of the FBI’s notes. “Truth/Admission or to get him to lie, so we can prosecute him or get him fired?”

Following those revelations, Trump’s Justice Department moved to drop its case against Flynn, but encountered hurdles in court after the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected Flynn’s plea to force U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan to drop his criminal case in August.

Flynn’s legal team had clashed with Sullivan, demanding in a filing last month that he should recuse himself from “further participation” in the Flynn case, citing an “appearance of bias” the lawyers claimed was “terrifying and mandates disqualification.”

Flynn was awaiting Sullivan’s ruling when Trump issued the pardon.

TRUMP CALLS INTO PENNSYLVANIA ELECTION MEETING, REPEATING CLAIMS OF VOTING IRREGULARITIES

In a statement, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler, D-N.Y., blasted the move, arguing the pardon is “undeserved, unprincipled, and one more stain on President Trump’s rapidly diminishing legacy.”

“President Trump dangled this pardon to encourage Flynn to backtrack on his pledge to cooperate with federal investigators—cooperation that might have

exposed the President's own wrongdoing. And it worked," Nadler said. "Flynn broke his deal, recanted his plea, received the backing of the Attorney General over the objections of career prosecutors, and now has secured a pardon from the President of the United States."

He noted that the move by Trump is "part of a pattern," citing his previous decision to grant clemency to former Trump adviser Roger Stone.

"These actions are an abuse of power and fundamentally undermine the rule of law," Nadler added. "The President's enablers have constructed an elaborate narrative in which Trump and Flynn are victims and the Constitution is subject to the whims of the President. Americans soundly rejected this nonsense when they voted out President Trump."

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A DOJ spokesperson told Fox News that the department was "not consulted" but officials were given a "heads-up" Wednesday.

"We would have preferred to see if Judge Sullivan would act and for the matter to be resolved in court. We were confident in the likelihood of our success in the case," the spokesperson added. "That being said, this is obviously an appropriate use of the President's pardon power."

According to a report by Axios, Flynn's pardon is one of many that the president intends to issue before leaving office.

Fox News' Sam Dorman and The Associated Press contributed to this report

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