

AG Jeff Sessions denies misleading Judiciary Committee on Russia

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Washington: US Attorney General Jeff Sessions has said that his answer before the Senate Judiciary Committee involving contact with the Russians was "correct".

In a letter to the Congress on Monday, Sessions insisted that he did not have communications with the Russians as part of the presidential campaign even though he had twice met with Moscow's ambassador Sergey Kislyak -- first at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland in July and then in his Senate office in September.

Sessions said that he did not tell legislators sooner about those meetings because he thought he had fully answered the particular question he was asked.

"I do not recall any discussions with the Russian ambassador, or any other representative of the Russian government, regarding the political campaign on these occasions or any other occasion," the AG said.

At his confirmation hearing in January, Senator Al Franken had asked Sessions what he would do as Attorney General if there was any evidence that anyone affiliated with the Trump campaign communicated with the Russian government during the course of the campaign.

Sessions responded: "I'm not aware of any of those activities. I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I didn't have - did not have communications with the Russians, and I'm unable to comment on it."

"My answer was correct," Sessions wrote in his letter to Congress.

"As I noted in my public statement on March 2, I was surprised by the allegations in the question, which I had not heard before. I answered the question, which asked about a 'continuing exchange of information during the campaign between Trump's surrogates and intermediaries for the Russian government', honestly. I did not mention communications I had had with the Russian ambassador over the years because the question did not ask about them."

Sessions recused himself last week from any investigation of Russian contacts related to the presidential campaign after his meetings with the Russian ambassador were disclosed, CNN reported.

In Monday's letter, he also said his recusal covers investigations of "Russian contacts with the Trump transition team and administration".

Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley thanked Sessions for his letter, saying it helped to "clear up confusion".

"I appreciate Attorney General Sessions' quick action to clear up confusion about his statement and I look forward to confirming the team who can help him carry out the functions of the department," the Iowa Republican added.

- With IANS Inputs