

Donald Trump eager for big meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin; some advisers wary

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Washington: US President Donald Trump is eager to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin with full diplomatic bells and whistles when the two leaders visit Germany for G20 Summit next month. But the idea is exposing deep divisions within the administration on the best way to approach Moscow in the midst of an ongoing investigation into Russian meddling in the US elections.

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Many administration officials believe the US needs to maintain its distance from Russia at such a sensitive time and interact only with great caution. But Trump and some others within his administration have been pressing for a full bilateral meeting. He's calling for media access and all the typical protocol associated with such sessions, even as officials within the State Department and National Security Council urge more restraint, according to a current and a former administration official.

Some advisers have recommended that the president instead do either a quick, informal "pull-aside" on the sidelines of the summit, or that the U.S. and Russian delegations hold "strategic stability talks," which typically don't involve the presidents. The officials spoke anonymously to discuss private policy discussions.

The contrasting views underscore differing views within the administration on overall Russia policy, and Trump's eagerness to develop a working relationship with Russia despite the ongoing investigations.

There are potential benefits to a meeting with Putin. A face-to-face meeting can humanize the two sides and often removes some of the intrigue involved in impersonal, telephone communication. Trump, the ultimate dealmaker, has repeatedly suggested that he can replace the Obama-era damage in the U.S.-Russia relationship with a partnership, particularly on issues like the ongoing Syria conflict.

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