

Trump had second conversation with Putin in Germany

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Washington: President Donald Trump had another, previously undisclosed conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in Germany this month.

Photo: PTI. Trump had second conversation with Putin in Germany

White House spokesman Sean Spicer and National Security Council spokesman Michael Anton confirmed that Trump and Putin spoke at a dinner for world leaders and their spouses at the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg, Germany.

The conversation came hours after Trump and Putin's first official face-to-face meeting on July 7, which was originally scheduled to last just half an hour but stretched on for more than two. The two world leaders were also captured on video shaking hands and exchanging a few words after they arrived at the G-20 summit of industrialized and developing nations earlier that day.

Anton would not specify the duration of the conversation. But he said the discussion was casual and should not be characterized as a "meeting" or even a less formal, but official, "pull-aside."

"A conversation over dessert should not be characterized as a meeting," he said.

The dinner, hosted by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, was open only to world leaders and their spouses, as well as one translator per couple, according to a senior White House official who described the event on condition of anonymity despite the president's criticism of unnamed sources.

The official stressed that Trump spoke with many leaders over the course of the dinner and said he spoke briefly with Putin, who was seated next to first lady Melania Trump, as the event was concluding. Trump spoke with Putin using Russia's translator, since the American translator did not speak Russian.

But Ian Bremmer, who said he spoke with two people who attended the dinner, said that Trump and Putin spoke for nearly an hour while sitting among the other world leaders and their spouses at the dinner. Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and the president of the Eurasia Group, a consulting firm.

Attendees described the meeting as startling, said Bremmer, who was told Trump was very animated as he spoke with Putin, often using his hands to gesture.

Trump defended the dinner in a pair of angry tweets late Tuesday that noted the dinner had been on his public schedule.

"Fake News story of secret dinner with Putin is sick." All G 20 leaders, and spouses, were invited by the Chancellor of Germany. Press knew!" he wrote.

Trump and Putin's relationship has been under scrutiny since the election campaign, when Trump repeatedly praised Putin as a strong leader and publicly encouraged him to hack then-rival Hillary Clinton's emails. Trump aides have since said he was joking.

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