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How lobbyists help ex-Soviets woo Washington  
  
**BYLINE:** By GLENN R. SIMPSON  
  
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**Former Federal Bureau of Investigation director William Sessions once condemned Russia's rising mafia. "We can beat organized crime," he told a Moscow security conference in 1997.**

Today, Mr. Sessions is a lawyer for one of the FBI's "Most Wanted": Semyon Mogilevich, a Ukraine-born Russian whom the FBI says is one of Russia's most powerful organized-crime figures.

Mr. Sessions is trying to negotiate a deal with the U.S. Department of Justice for his client, who is charged with racketeering and is a key figure in a separate Justice Department probe of energy deals between Russia and Ukraine.

**A number of notable Washington insiders are earning big fees these days by representing controversial clients from the former Soviet Union.**

From prominent businessmen some facing criminal allegations to top politicians, well-known ex-Soviets are lining up to hire help with criminal cases, lobbying and consulting. These figures, many of whom made fortunes in the wide-open 1990s amid the Soviet Union's disintegration, hire Washington insiders to help rehabilitate their reputations in the West or to persuade investors and regulators they are committed to good corporate governance.

advisers key players in Western efforts to promote regional stability.

Among recent examples:

**For a $560,000 fee, Bob Dole,** the former Senate majority leader and 1996 Republican presidential nominee, helped a Russian billionaire accused by rivals of bribery obtain a visa to visit the U.S. in 2005, among other things.

**Leonid Reiman**, a powerful member of Russia's cabinet and close ally of President Vladimir Putin, uses a Washington public-relations consultant. Mr. Reiman is under federal investigation in the U.S. over money laundering and is locked in a high-stakes battle with Moscow conglomerate Alfa for control of a Russian telecommunications empire. Alfa has paid **Barbour Griffith** & Rogers the influential lobbying firm co-founded by Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour nearly $2 million in lobbying fees.

**Paul Manafort,** a former adviser to Mr. Dole's presidential campaign, has advised a Ukrainian metals billionaire and his close political ally, Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. Mr. Yanukovich, who favors closer ties with Mr. Putin's administration, is embroiled in a power struggle with pro-Western Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko.

In some cases, the details of how these ex-Soviet clients made their fortunes are murky and the source, amount and purpose of the fees they pay Washington consultants can be as well. In 2005, for example, **Ukrainian politician Yuri Boyko** used a Caribbean shell company to pay a Washington lobbyist for help arranging meetings with top Republicans.

**Mr. Boyko**, currently Ukraine's minister of energy, was the architect of gas deals between Russia and Ukraine now being investigated by the U.S. Justice Department for possible ties to the alleged mafia client of Mr. Sessions. Mr. Boyko said the $98,000 in fees was paid by a small political party he heads. Annex Holdings, the Caribbean firm that paid Mr. Boyko's lobbyist, also had a stake in the gas deals, corporate records show.

At times, even clients' names are camouflaged by lobbyists despite federal laws making clear that they aren't allowed to disguise identities by taking fees from intermediaries. Without such rules, says prominent Washington ethics lawyer Jan Baran, "you would just have a bunch of shell organizations identified as clients of lobbyists and lobbying firms."

In 2004, for instance, a United Kingdom shell company called **Foruper Ltd.,** which had no assets or employees, **paid Barbour Griffith $820,000**. Foruper was established by an attorney who structured the natural-gas deals being investigated by the U.S. Justice Department. Prosecutors are investigating whether there are ties **between the attorney who set up Foruper and Mr. Mogilevich, Mr. Sessions's client.**

In its filings, Barbour Griffith said the fees were for "promotion of greater cooperation and financial ties between Eastern Europe and the West."

**In 2002 and 2003, a group called "Friends of Ukraine" paid Barbour Griffith** $320,000. Tax records show that Friends of Ukraine, which no longer exists, was headquartered at Barbour Griffith's own office in Washington. The group's chairman was firm partner **Lanny Griffith**. Mr. Griffith said in an email that the firm as a policy doesn't discuss client matters but added that Barbour Griffith "has been scrupulous in our compliance" with laws governing the disclosure of lobbying clients.

Barbour Griffith is locked in a legal battle with associates of Mr. Reiman, the Russian minister, whose Washington adviser is a former Wall Street Journal reporter named Mark D'Anastasio. Mr. D'Anastasio said he once helped Mr. Reiman as a favor to a friend but doesn't work for him.

Longstanding federal laws require Americans to register with the federal government if they do lobbying or public-relations work for foreign clients. But details in those filings often offer only a vague sense of the work being done.

**Mr. Dole,** for instance, disclosed in lobby filings with the U.S. Senate his work for **Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska**. He described it as involving "U.S. Department of State visa policies and procedures."

Mr. Deripaska, who has close ties to the Kremlin, emerged from Russia's "**aluminum wars**" of the 1990s with a virtual monopoly on the nation's aluminum production.

Mr. Deripaska has long been dogged by allegations from business rivals in courts in the U.S. and U.K. that he used bribery, intimidation and violence to amass his fortune. Those accusations, which he denies, have never been substantiated and no criminal charges have been filed. But for years they helped keep the State Department from granting him a visa.

**In 2003, the Russian industrialist paid $300,000 to Mr. Dole's law firm, Alston & Bird,** according to lobbying reports. After that, Mr. Dole worked to persuade U.S. officials his client isn't a criminal and that his business operations are transparent, said people with knowledge of the matter. In 2005, the State Department reversed itself and granted the visa. Mr. Deripaska then paid Mr. Dole **and his firm an additional $260,000, filings show.**

Mr. Deripaska traveled to Washington in 2005 and also made trips to the U.S. last year, said people with knowledge of the situation.

Mr. Dole and a State Department spokeswoman declined to comment.

Simon Moyse, a London-based spokesman for Mr. Deripaska, said the businessman currently possesses a multiple-entry U.S. visa. He declined to comment further or provide documentation of Mr. Deripaska's visa status.

The former Dole strategist Mr. Manafort and a former Dole fund raiser, **Bruce Jackson,** have received fees and donations from Ukrainian billionaire **Rinat Akhmetov**, the political patron of Ukrainian Prime Minister Yanukovich.

Messrs. Manafort and Jackson played prominent roles in the Ukrainian's recent visit to Washington. The visit included meetings with U.S. officials, including Vice President **Dick Cheney**. A company controlled by Mr. Akhmetov donated $300,000 in 2005 to a human-rights charity run by Mr. Jackson and his wife, an Internal Revenue Service document reviewed by The Wall Street Journal shows. Mr. Jackson said he was grateful for the support.

Mr. Manafort, who isn't registered as a consultant to the Ukrainian leader, didn't respond to requests for comment.

**Mr. Sessions's client, Mr. Mogilevich, is accused in a 45-count racketeering and money-laundering indictment in Philadelphia of masterminding an elaborate stock fraud using a web of shell companies in Europe. The Justice Department also is** investigating whether there are any ties between Mr. Mogilevich and a recent series of billion-dollar natural-gas deals between Russian gas giant OAO Gazprom and Ukraine, people familiar with the matter said. The probe is being led by the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section.

**According to people familiar with the matter, Mr. Sessions recently approached former colleagues at Justice with an unusual offer: Mr. Mogilevich would provide the U.S. with intelligence on Islamist terrorism if prosecutors opened negotiations to resolve his legal problems in the U.S. Federal prosecutors rejected that offer, lawyers and others familiar with the matter said.**

Mr. Sessions's firm and a Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

The Mogilevich talks were brokered by a prominent Washington security expert named **Neil C. Livingstone**, who was briefly in the news during the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal for his work on terrorism issues with White House aide Oliver North.

He declined to discuss the Mogilevich talks, other than to say they involved "very sensitive issues."

Until recently, Mr. Livingstone was chief executive of GlobalOptions, a Washington **corporate-intelligence firm he founded. Mr. Sessions sits on the firm's advisory board. Most of its clients, the firm says, "operate in Russia and the Caribbean."**

GlobalOptions has worked with former Soviet businessmen in the past. In 2004, Mr. Livingstone said, lobbyists at Barbour Griffith introduced GlobalOptions to a Cyprus-based firm called Highrock Holdings. Highrock is controlled by **Dimytro Firtash**, a Ukrainian businessman who acknowledges the company's major shareholders once included Mr. Mogilevich's wife.

**In 2003-2005, Mr. Firtash brokered several billion-dollar deals between Gazprom and the government of Ukraine. They netted big profits for Highrock -- and criticism from the U.S. ambassador to the Ukraine at the time for the deals' lack of transparency.**

Mr. Livingstone said Highrock hired GlobalOptions in 2004 to help it win federal safety certification for passenger jets it hoped to export to Central Asia.

However, in a recent lawsuit filed by GlobalOptions against Highrock claiming unpaid bills, the security firm alleged that Mr. Firtash hired GlobalOptions for an unspecified "special operation" on behalf of a Ukrainian government official. The two sides ceased litigating the suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, after the bill was paid, but the suit was never withdrawn.

"We have no knowledge of a company called GlobalOptions," a spokesman for Mr. Firtash said, adding that he severed his ties to Mr. Mogilevich several years ago.

Greg Smith was one of three directors of a public company run by a stock swindler who has now been charged three separate times with grand theft and felony fraud by the SEC.

Fort Lauderdale pilot Greg smith was a director of a public company which went bankrupt after the owner had swindled and stolen as much money as he could from the investors and shareholders of his company.

the same kind of stock fraud

just like the people involved in the related drug plane flown out of sty Petersburg Clearwater international airport

Terms: ("Paul Manafort" AND "Oleg Deripaska")

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Ukrainian Weekly

August 21, 2016

**IN THE PRESS: The Yanukovych-Manafort connection**

**BYLINE:** Anonymous

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**ABSTRACT**

This Versailles, frankly, to be honest [Chris Cuomo], it actually looks like some of Donald Trump's properties. You're talking about Swarovski crystal embedded, private elevators, golden chandeliers, private zoos, millions and millions of dollars of Ukrainian money that had been funneled and embezzled. On top of that, you're talking about very deep contacts in the very murky waters of [Putin]'s inner circle. **Oleg Deripaska,** one of the most notorious Russian oligarchs/gangsters, who has very close ties to President Putin. So what does this really say about the kind of foreign policy that Donald Trump would like to espouse and the kind of people that he would like to consort with and to support? Because as you heard just now, he has many times come out and said that President Putin is a good man. He seems to be frankly indifferent to his invasion of Crimea, which by the way was part of Ukraine, a sovereign country.

**FULL TEXT**

CNN's "New Day: morning newscast, August 16 (transcript provided by World News Report's "Media Matters for America"):

Co-host Chris Cuomo, speaking with CNN correspondent Clarissa Ward, asked her about the alleged $12 million in payments to Trump campaign manager **Paul Manafort**.

He said: "All right, Clarissa, the money, this $12 million, this ledger may be a little bit of a distraction. Because the true currency here are the contracts, right? I mean Ukraine, [former Ukrainian President Viktor] Yanukovych, that's only the beginning of the trail when it comes to what Manafort does. There was an entirely separate investigation into moving money from Russian oligarchs and who was it around [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and how deep does it go? And that is what wound up raising the eyebrows when you saw that Trump campaign got involved with changing the Republican platform on Ukraine. And then those lines in the speech yesterday about working with Russia and that Russia told us about the Boston bomber. It's all seen in a different context now. How deep might those contacts go?"

Ms. Ward responded:

"Well, Chris, let's just start out by looking at Viktor Yanukovych and what kind of a man and what kind of a president he was. This is someone who was jailed twice before becoming president for assault and for theft. This is somebody who rigged an election. This is somebody who was very well known to be one of the most rampantly corrupt leaders. This is somebody who ordered his own police to fire upon protesters in the Maidan after people came down to the square as part of an uprising against his corruption. Up to 100 people were killed in the Maidan revolution. And I actually visited his home, his estate. I should call it a mini-Versailles just outside of Kiev [sic] in the days after that protest movement was attempted to be quashed by him and he had leftthe country.

"And this Versailles, frankly, to be honest Chris, it actually looks like some of Donald Trump's properties. You're talking about Swarovski crystal embedded, private elevators, golden chandeliers, private zoos, millions and millions of dollars of Ukrainian money that had been funneled and embezzled. On top of that, you're talking about very deep contacts in the very murky waters of Putin's inner circle. **Oleg Deripaska,** one of the most notorious Russian oligarchs/gangsters, who has very close ties to President Putin. So what does this really say about the kind of foreign policy that Donald Trump would like to espouse and the kind of people that he would like to consort with and to support? Because as you heard just now, he has many times come out and said that President Putin is a good man. He seems to be frankly indifferent to his invasion of Crimea, which by the way was part of Ukraine, a sovereign country. And we heard yesterday in his speech, as I mention earlier, this kind of nostalgia for the hay day of the brutal dictator. So even if those $12.7 million are not an issue, the very deep association does raise serious moral questions."

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Ukrainian Weekly

August 21, 2016

**NEWSBRIEFS**

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**ABSTRACT**

KYIV - Kyiv accused Russia of seeking to provoke an escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, saying Moscow has bolstered separatist forces in the region with fresh deliveries of ammunition and military hardware. The assertion came as tensions between Moscow and Kyiv continued to rise after Russia claimed that Ukraine had tried to send "saboteurs" into Crimea to carry out "terrorist" attacks against infrastructure on the Russian-annexed peninsula - an allegation [Kyiv] says is "preposterous." Russia's Defense Ministry on August 12 announced the deployment of S-400 airdefense missile systems - which Moscow has touted as state-of-the art weapons - in Crimea. The military had pledged last month to deploy the system on the peninsula. And Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev raised the prospect of severing diplomatic relations with Kyiv in order to "sober up" Ukraine. "I would not want that to happen, but if there is no other option leftto impact the situation, the president [Vladimir Putin] could make such a decision," Mr. Medvedev said in response to a question. He noted that diplomatic ties between Russia and Georgia were cut offwhen they fought a brief war in 2008. Russia's accusation of a Ukrainian plot to destabilize Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in March 2014, added to tension following weeks of increased fighting between government forces and the Russia-backed separatists who hold parts of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. Each side is blaming the other for the increased tension. Ukraine's military intelligence service, which has categorically denied Russia's claims, alleged on August 12 that Russia was planning "large-scale provocative actions through the contact line in Ukraine's east" - a reference to the line separating government and separatist forces. Russia "will then accuse Ukraine of not complying" with the Minsk agreement, a Western-brokered peace deal for eastern Ukraine. The accusation came a day after President Petro Poroshenko put Ukraine's forces on the highest alert level in both eastern Ukraine and along the administrative boundary between mainland Ukraine and Crimea. The Foreign Affairs Ministry in Kyiv on August 12 demanded that Russia give monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) access to Crimea as well as greater access to separatist-held areas in eastern Ukraine, saying that Moscow is obliged to do so under existing agreements. It also called for monitors from the International Red Cross and the United Nations' human rights monitoring mission to be given access to Ukrainian detainees who are in the custody of Russian authorities. Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations, Volodymyr Yelchenko, charged on August 11 that some 40,000 Russian troops are now amassed in Crimea and along Russia's border with eastern Ukraine. (RFE/RL, with reporting by AFP, Reuters, AP, TASS and Interfax)

**FULL TEXT**

Kyiv probes evidence about Manafort

NEW YORK - Handwritten ledgers found in Kyiv seem to link **Paul Manafort**, who is currently the chairman of U.S. mogul Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign, to more than $12 million in undisclosed cash payments during his tenure as an adviser to the government of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych. The New York Times reported on August 14 that the ledgers are being investigated by Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau as possible evidence of widespread corruption inside the Yanukovych government. The ledgers mention Mr. Manafort's name 22 times and seem to document payments totaling $12.7 million between 2007 and 2012. Mr. Yanukovych fled the country in February 2014 amid massive public demonstrations. The Kyiv documents also seem to tie Mr. Manafort to a partnership with Russian oligarch **Oleg Deripaska** and the questionable purchase of Ukrainian cable television assets for some $18 million. Mr. Manafort declined to be interviewed for The New York Times story, but his lawyer said Mr. Manafort had not received "any such cash payments." The lawyer also denied that Mr. Manafort approved of or participated in any illegal activities. (RFE/RL, based on reporting by The New York Times)

Manafort tied to foreign lobbying

WASHINGTON - The Associated Press reports that political consultant **Paul Manafort**, the chairman of Republican candidate Donald Trump's U.S. presidential campaign, may have helped former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's government funnel millions of dollars to U.S. lobbyists in a way that obscured the source of the funding. In an August 17 report based on interviews with unnamed current and former employees of the Podesta Group lobbying firm, the AP said that Manafort and associate Rick Gates moved the money through a non-profit organization called the European Center for a Modern Ukraine in 2012, when they were paid consultants to the Yanukovych government. That center was closely tied to Mr. Yanukovych's administration and his Party of Regions. According to the AP, Messrs. Manafort and Gates funneled at least $2.2 million through the center to U.S. lobbying firms to "advocate positions generally in line with those of Yanukovych's government." The work included lobbying the U.S. Congress to reject a resolution condemning the jailing of Mr. Yanukovych's main political rival, former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. That resolution was adopted in November 2013. Mr. Gates told AP that the two men connected the European Center with the lobbying firms and occasionally consulted with those firms. He said the actions were lawful and did not violate the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act. Podesta Group employee John Ward Anderson told the AP, "I was never given any reason to believe [Gates] was a Party of Regions consultant." He noted, "My assumption was that he was working for the [European Center], as were we." (RFE/RL, with reporting by AP)

Pyatt: Ukraine will overcome difficulties

KYIV - The U.S. envoy in Kyiv says Ukrainians will overcome their current difficulties of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, corruption and financial problems because they have survived so many major crises in recent years. "I think having survived 2014 - the invasion of Crimea, the [deadly] shootings on the Maidan, the collapse of the hryvnia and the financial system - Ukraine can survive anything if it got through 2014," U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt told RFE/RL in an interview on August 17. Mr. Pyatt, who will leave his post in the coming days to take the U.S. ambassador's post in Greece, said he considers those crises in 2014 and the following years to be "the most difficult years" for Ukraine since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He said the United States had played "an important role in helping the Ukrainian people to take control once again of their own democracy." He noted: "I think one of my regrets is that the [Ukrainian] government, the [Ukrainian] presidency, were not able to move more quickly against the cancer of corruption," He added that the battle against corruption was "one of the major challenges that still stands before Ukraine and the Ukrainian people." Mr. Pyatt, 52, praised the role of the Ukraine's new corruption- fighting institutions, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and a special anti-corruption prosecutor. He said the difficult job of changing attitudes in society to help prevent corrupt practices "should have begun 25 years ago, and I think I regret that perhaps I could have played a more assertive role earlier on these issues." Mr. Pyatt has been ambassador in Ukraine since 2013 and was an active supporter of the Euro-Maidan protests in Kyiv that ousted pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Kyiv accuses Russia of provocations

KYIV - Kyiv accused Russia of seeking to provoke an escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, saying Moscow has bolstered separatist forces in the region with fresh deliveries of ammunition and military hardware. The assertion came as tensions between Moscow and Kyiv continued to rise after Russia claimed that Ukraine had tried to send "saboteurs" into Crimea to carry out "terrorist" attacks against infrastructure on the Russian-annexed peninsula - an allegation Kyiv says is "preposterous." Russia's Defense Ministry on August 12 announced the deployment of S-400 airdefense missile systems - which Moscow has touted as state-of-the art weapons - in Crimea. The military had pledged last month to deploy the system on the peninsula. And Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev raised the prospect of severing diplomatic relations with Kyiv in order to "sober up" Ukraine. "I would not want that to happen, but if there is no other option leftto impact the situation, the president [Vladimir Putin] could make such a decision," Mr. Medvedev said in response to a question. He noted that diplomatic ties between Russia and Georgia were cut offwhen they fought a brief war in 2008. Russia's accusation of a Ukrainian plot to destabilize Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in March 2014, added to tension following weeks of increased fighting between government forces and the Russia-backed separatists who hold parts of the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. Each side is blaming the other for the increased tension. Ukraine's military intelligence service, which has categorically denied Russia's claims, alleged on August 12 that Russia was planning "large-scale provocative actions through the contact line in Ukraine's east" - a reference to the line separating government and separatist forces. Russia "will then accuse Ukraine of not complying" with the Minsk agreement, a Western-brokered peace deal for eastern Ukraine. The accusation came a day after President Petro Poroshenko put Ukraine's forces on the highest alert level in both eastern Ukraine and along the administrative boundary between mainland Ukraine and Crimea. The Foreign Affairs Ministry in Kyiv on August 12 demanded that Russia give monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) access to Crimea as well as greater access to separatist-held areas in eastern Ukraine, saying that Moscow is obliged to do so under existing agreements. It also called for monitors from the International Red Cross and the United Nations' human rights monitoring mission to be given access to Ukrainian detainees who are in the custody of Russian authorities. Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations, Volodymyr Yelchenko, charged on August 11 that some 40,000 Russian troops are now amassed in Crimea and along Russia's border with eastern Ukraine. (RFE/RL, with reporting by AFP, Reuters, AP, TASS and Interfax)

Lavrov, Steinmeier discuss Ukraine

YEKATERINBURG, Russia - Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov and German Foreign Affairs Minister Frank- Walter Steinmeier held talks in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg that focused primarily on Ukraine and Syria. Speaking to reporters after the August 15 meeting, the two ministers affirmed their support for the Minsk process aimed at resolving the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Mr. Lavrov said Moscow is prepared to provide "irrefutable" evidence of an alleged plan by Kyiv to launch sabotage attacks in Crimea, the Ukrainian region that Moscow annexed in 2014. Moscow does not plan to sever diplomatic relations with Ukraine over the incident, saying that doing so would be "an extreme measure," Mr. Lavrov added. Ukraine has denied any involvement in or knowledge of such a sabotage plot. Mr. Steinmeier said the worsening situation in Ukraine in recent weeks is "worrisome" and called on both Moscow and Kyiv to investigate the alleged sabotage plot. (RFE/RL, based on reporting by Interfax and Reuters)

Asylum granted to Kremlin critic

KYIV - A Russian opposition activist who was the first person charged under a strict new law restricting protests has received political asylum in Ukraine. Vladimir Ionov, 76, told Ukraine's Hromadske Radio on August 15 that his asylum request - filed after Russian authorities charged him with attending more than two unauthorized public protests during one six-month period - had been accepted. Under legislation enacted in Russia in 2014, such activity is punishable by up to five years in prison. Rights activists call the new law a menacing tool to crack down on dissent. Mr. Ionov did not show up at his trial in December, and media reports at the time said he fled to Ukraine. Another Russian opposition activist, Ildar Dadin, was sentenced to three years in jail on December 7; he was the first person to be convicted under the new legislation. (RFE/ RL, based on reporting by nv.ua and hromadskeradio. org)

Pro-Ukraine activist refused early release

MOSCOW - A court in Russia has refused to grant early release on parole to a Russian activist in the southern region of Krasnodar who was jailed on charges of propagating extremism and separatism via the Internet. Darya Polyudova was sentenced to two years in a minimum-security penal colony in December 2015, becoming the first person in Russia convicted under a law criminalizing calls for separatism on the Internet that came into force in May 2014. Ms. Polyudova's mother, Tatyana Polyudova, wrote on Facebook that a court in the city of Novorossiysk did not provide any reasons for its August 10 decision. Ms. Polyudova was indicted in 2014 after she criticized Moscow online for its support of Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's east, where fighting between government forces and the separatists has killed more than 9,500 people since April 2014. The Moscow-based Memorial Human Rights Center has added Ms. Polyudova to its list of political prisoners in Russia. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Crimean Tatar forced into psych clinic

SYMFEROPOL, Ukraine - A court in Russia-annexed Crimea has ruled that a noted Crimean Tatar activist, Ilmi Umerov, must be placed in a psychiatric clinic for examination. The Kyiv District Court in Symferopol on August 11 approved the motion by investigators. Umerov's lawyer, Nikolai Polozov, said that the court's ruling will be appealed. Mr. Umerov, 59, former deputy chairman of Crimean Tatars' selfgoverning body - the Mejlis - was charged with separatism in May after he made public statements against the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea by Russia. Mr. Umerov was allowed to stay home during investigations into his case. The Moscow-based Memorial human rights center has called the case against Mr. Umerov "illegal and politically motivated." The majority of Crimea's indigenous people, Crimean Tatars, opposed the peninsula's annexation by Moscow in March 2014. (RFE/RL, based on reporting by UNIAN and Interfax)

Uzbek accused of fighting with separatists

PRAGUE - Authorities in Ukraine say they have detained an Uzbek citizen believed to have been fighting alongside Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern region of Donetsk. A spokeswoman for the Donetsk regional prosecutor's office told RFE/RL on August 16 that Aleksandr Brykin, 20, an ethnic-Russian native of Tashkent, had confessed to joining pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk in December 2014 and serving in a separatist military unit there until May 2015. Fighting between Ukrainian government forces and Russia-backed separatists in the eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk has killed more than 9,500 people since April 2014. There have been numerous reports that many volunteers and mercenaries from former Soviet republics are fighting on both sides of the conflict. (RFE/RL's Uzbek Service)

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Waycross Journal-Herald (Georgia)

August 20, 2016 Saturday

**Russian Smear;**

**Hillary's Press Gets Nasty**

**BYLINE:** GENE LYONS, UNIVERSAL UCLICK SYNDICATE

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 5

**LENGTH:** 782 words

EDITOR'S NOTE: Without any proof, Hillary's supporters are attempting to smear Donald Trump as Vladimir Putin's candidate while conveninetly ignoring a $500,000 payment made by a Kremlin-connected bank, Renaissance Capital, to Bill Clinton in 2010. Clinton received the money for a one-hour-speech he made in Moscow.

Are we watching an American presidential campaign or the pilot episode of a bizarre new TV series? Or both? The hallmark of "reality TV," of course, being its extreme unreality.

On a daily basis, the Trump campaign invites sheer disbelief. Recently, Ivanka Trump posted an Instagram photo of herself sightseeing in scenic Croatia with Wendi Deng Murdoch.

The New York Daily News explains that "Deng, who was divorced from Rupert Murdoch in 2013 ... has been linked romantically to Russian strongman Vladimir Putin."

Meanwhile, Russian operatives are belived by some to be openly intervening in an American presidential election: hacking Democratic Party emails and harassing obscure political columnists.

Always on Donald Trump's side. You've got to ask yourself why.

One possible answer may have appeared in the New York Times. Trump campaign manager **Paul Manafort**'s name turned up 22 times on a secret ledger detailing $12.7 million in illegal payments handed out under deposed Ukranian president Viktor Yanukovych.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Manafort denies any wrongdoing. He says he has never worked for the Russian or Ukranian governments and that no cash payments were paid directly to him.)

Supposedly, Manafort was also involved in a "murky" $18 million deal to sell Ukrainian cable TV "to a partnership put together by Mr. Manafort and a Russian oligarch, **Oleg Deripaska,** a close ally of President Vladimir V. Putin."

Him again.

The information was given to Times reporters by the Ukranian government's "National Anti-Corruption Bureau," no doubt tasked with putting as many of the current regime's political rivals as possible in prison.

At the expense of being a spoilsport, I've learned to be highly skeptical of New York Times "blockbusters." From the Whitewater hoax onward, the newspaper has produced a series of Clinton scandal stories, culminating in last April's abortive attempt to hint that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had corruptly engineered the sale of a Wyoming uranium mine.

"Look," I wrote last April, "there's a reason articles like the Times' big expose are stultifyingly dull and require the skills of a contract lawyer to parse. Murky sentences and jumbled chronologies signify that the 'Clinton rules' are back: all innuendo and guilt-by-association. All ominous rhetorical questions, but rarely straightforward answers."

So it comes as no great surprise that Ukrainian investigators "have yet to determine if (Manafort) actually received the cash."

So is Manafort a victim of the "Clinton Rules"? Could be.

But there's no doubt about this: "Before he fled to Russia two years ago, Mr. Yanukovych ... relied heavily on the advice of Mr. Manafort and his firm, who helped them win several elections."

On evidence, little things like democratic institutions and the rule of law don't appear high on Manafort's priority list. Among his previous clients were Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos and Zaire's infamous Mobutu Sese Seko, aptly described as "the archetypal African dictator." Both regimes were essentially kleptocracies, characterized by nepotism, brutality and extreme corruption.

Comparatively speaking, Vladimir Putin would appear to be one of Manafort's more savory associates.

So when candidate Trump expresses a Russia-friendly foreign policy agenda -- musing aloud about recognizing Putin's illegal occupation of Crimea, and hinting that President Trump might refuse to defend NATOalli es against Russian attack, it's reasonable to wonder what's being said behind closed doors.

Or when Trump invites Russia to conduct cyberwarfare against his Democratic opponent. "Russia, if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing," Trump said in July.

Later, of course, the candidate alibied that he was being sarcastic. He's a great kidder, Trump. Something blows up in his face, it was a joke.

Washington Monthly's David Atkins poses the million ruble question: "How much does (sic) Trump and his team need to do before we start asking serious questions about whether they're a Manchurian Candidate campaign actively working on behalf of a foreign nation?"

Basically, that depends upon how big a piece of Trump Russian oligarchs own -- one big reason we'll never see his income taxes.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gene Lyons is a colunist for the Arkansas Times at Little Rock. You can email Lyons at eugenelyons2@yahoo.com

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International New York Times

August 2, 2016 Tuesday

**How an aide to Trump held sway in Ukraine;**

**Manafort's advisory work and business links with tycoons draw scrutiny**

**BYLINE:** STEVEN LEE MYERS and ANDREW E. KRAMER

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 1

**LENGTH:** 1878 words

**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON

**ABSTRACT**

With Russia becoming a focus of the presidential campaign, Mr. Manafort's work and business dealings in Ukraine have come under scrutiny.

**FULL TEXT**

Few political consultants have had a client fail quite as spectacularly as **Paul Manafort's** did in Ukraine in the winter of 2014.

President Viktor F. Yanukovych, who owed his election to, as an American diplomat put it, an ''extreme makeover'' that Mr. Manafort oversaw, bolted the country in the face of violent street protests. He found sanctuary in Russia and never returned, as his patron, President Vladimir V. Putin, proceeded to dismember Ukraine, annexing Crimea and fomenting a war in two other provinces that continues.

Mr. Manafort was undaunted.

Within months of his client's political demise, he went to work seeking to bring the former president's disgraced party back to power, much as he had with Mr. Yanukovych nearly a decade earlier. Mr. Manafort has already had some success, with former Yanukovych loyalists - and some Communists - forming a new bloc opposing Ukraine's struggling pro-Western government.

And now Mr. Manafort has taken on a much larger campaign, seeking to turn Donald J. Trump into a winning presidential candidate.

With Mr. Putin's Russia becoming a focus of the United States presidential campaign, Mr. Manafort's work in Ukraine has come under scrutiny - along with his business dealings with prominent Ukrainian and Russian tycoons.

After disclosures of a breach of the Democratic National Committee's emails - which American intelligence officials have linked to Russian spies - Mr. Manafort and Mr. Trump are facing sharp criticism over what is seen as an unusually sympathetic view of Mr. Putin and his policies toward Ukraine. That view has upended decades of party orthodoxy toward Russia, a country that the previous Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, called ''our No.1 geopolitical foe.''

On Sunday, Mr. Trump even echoed Mr. Putin's justification of the annexation of Crimea, saying the majority of people in the region wanted to be part of Russia, remarks that were prominently featured on state news channels in Moscow.

It is far from certain that Mr. Manafort's views have directly shaped Mr. Trump's, since Mr. Trump spoke favorably of Mr. Putin's leadership before Mr. Manafort joined the campaign. But it is clear that the two have a shared view of Russia and of its neighbors like Ukraine - an affection, even - that, in Mr. Manafort's case, has been shaped by years of business dealings as much as by any policy or ideology.

''I wouldn't put out any moral arguments about his work,'' said Yevgeny E. Kopachko, a pollster with Mr. Yanukovych's former party who cooperated with Mr. Manafort for years and called him a pragmatic and effective strategist. ''Nobody has a monopoly on truth and morals.''

Mr. Manafort did not respond to requests for an interview. In television interviews on Sunday, he defended Mr. Trump's views on Russia, saying that as president, Mr. Trump would be firm with Russia but would deal with it like any other country when doing so suited American interests.

''He views Russia as a foreign power that has its own interests at stake,'' Mr. Manafort said on CBS's ''Face the Nation.''

Until he joined Mr. Trump's presidential campaign this year, Mr. Manafort's work in Ukraine had been his most significant political campaign in recent years. He began his career in Republican politics in the 1970s and extended it overseas to advising authoritarian leaders, including Mobutu Sese Seko in what was then Zaire, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and Mr. Yanukovych.

Mr. Manafort, 67, is the scion of an immigrant family that built a construction business in Connecticut. A lawyer by education, he served briefly in the Reagan administration before devoting himself to politics and later to business. A review of his work in Ukraine shows how politics and business converged in a country still struggling to function as a democracy, 25 years after it gained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In that world in flux, Mr. Manafort's political strategy had echoes of Mr. Trump's populist campaign.

Mr. Manafort's influence in the country was significant, and his political expertise deeply valued, according to Ukrainian politicians and officials who worked with him. He also had a voice in decisions about major American investments in Ukraine, said a former spokesman for Ukraine's Foreign Ministry, Oleg Voloshyn, who also ran as a candidate in the new bloc Mr. Manafort helped form.

He persuaded the government to lower grain export tariffs, a change that benefited agribusiness investors like Cargill, and to open negotiations with Chevron and Exxon for oil and natural gas exploration in the country.

Mr. Manafort began working in Ukraine after the popular uprising in the winter of 2004-5 that became known as the Orange Revolution. Mr. Yanukovych, then prime minister, was declared the winner of a presidential election in 2004 that was marred by fraud and overturned by the country's highest court after weeks of protests in favor of his pro-Western rival, Viktor A. Yushchenko.

Mr. Yanukovych had relied disastrously on Russian political advisers who underestimated voter frustration. After his defeat, he turned to American experts.

Mr. Manafort had begun working for one of Ukraine's richest men, Rinat Akhmetov, to improve the image of his companies. Mr. Akhmetov was also a prominent sponsor of Mr. Yanukovych's party, the Party of Regions, and he introduced the two men.

With Mr. Manafort's advice, Mr. Yanukovych began a comeback, with the Party of Regions winning the biggest bloc in parliamentary elections in 2006 and again in 2007, returning him to the post of prime minister. At the time, Mr. Manafort called Mr. Yanukovych, a former coal trucking director who was twice convicted of assault as a young man, an outstanding leader who had been badly misunderstood in the West.

According to State Department cables at the time that were later released by WikiLeaks, Mr. Manafort and his colleagues Phil Griffin and Catherine Barnes frequently pressed American diplomats in Ukraine to treat Mr. Yanukovych and his supporters equally so as not to risk being seen as favoring his opponents in the new elections. With Mr. Manafort's help, the party was ''working to change its image from that of a haven for mobsters into that of a legitimate political party,'' wrote the American ambassador at the time, John E. Herbst.

During this time, lucrative side deals opened for Mr. Manafort.

In 2008, he and the developer Arthur G. Cohen negotiated a deal to buy the site of the Drake Hotel on Park Avenue in Manhattan. One partner was Dmytro Firtash, an oligarch who made billions as a middleman for Gazprom, the Russian natural gas giant, and who was known for funneling the money into the campaigns of pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine, including Mr. Yanukovych. The three men intended to reopen the site as a mall and spa called Bulgari Tower, according to a lawsuit filed in Manhattan by Yulia V. Tymoshenko, a former prime minister of Ukraine. In the end, though, the project unraveled.

A separate deal also funneled Russian-linked oligarchic money into Ukraine. In 2007, Mr. Manafort and two partners, Rick Gates and Rick Davis, set up a private equity company in the Cayman Islands to buy assets in Ukraine and invited the Russian oligarch **Oleg** **Deripaska** to invest, according to a court filing. Mr. Deripaska agreed to pay a 2 percent annual management fee to Mr. Manafort and his partners, and he put $100 million into the fund, which bought a cable television station in the Black Sea port of Odessa, Ukraine, before the agreement unraveled in disagreements over auditing and Mr. Deripaska sued Mr. Manafort. The case is still pending.

By 2010, Mr. Yanukovych's revival was complete. He had won a presidential campaign against Ms. Tymoshenko, who was convicted of abuse of office and sent to prison.

Mr. Kopachko, the pollster, said Mr. Manafort envisioned an approach that exploited regional and ethnic peculiarities in voting, tapping the disenfranchisement of those who felt abandoned by the Orange Revolution in eastern Ukraine, which has more ethnic Russians and Russian speakers.

Konstantin Grishchenko, a former foreign minister and a deputy prime minister under Mr. Yanukovych, said in a telephone interview that Mr. Manafort had ultimately grown disillusioned with his client. Mr. Manafort pressed Mr. Yanukovych to sign an agreement with the European Union that would link the country closer to the West - and lobbied for the Americans to support Ukraine's membership, despite deep reservations because of the prosecution of Ms. Tymoshenko.

Mr. Manafort helped draft a report defending the prosecution that Mr. Yanukovych's government commissioned from the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in 2012.

Mr. Manafort's role was disclosed after a document was discovered in a box in a sauna belonging to a former senior Ukrainian official. Other documents in that cache are now evidence in a criminal case against a former justice official.

Ultimately, Mr. Yanukovych disregarded Mr. Manafort's advice and refused to sign the trade agreement, which Mr. Putin vehemently opposed. Mr. Yanukovych's decision led to the protests that culminated in two nights of violence in February 2014 and Mr. Yanukovych's flight.

Mr. Manafort's chance for a comeback, however, came sooner than anyone had expected. When the government of President Petro O. Poroshenko called snap parliamentary elections for October 2014, just eight months later, Mr. Manafort rallied the dispirited remnants of Mr. Yanukovych's party.

He was now on the payroll of Mr. Yanukovych's former chief of staff, Serhiy Lyovochkin. Mr. Manafort flew to Ukraine in September 2014 and set to work rebranding a party deeply fractured by the violence and by Russia's intervention. Rather than try to resurrect the disgraced party, he supported pitching a bigger political tent to help his clients and, he argued, to help stabilize Ukraine. The new bloc would try to attract everyone in the country angry at the new Western-backed government.

It was Mr. Manafort who had argued for a new name for the movement - the Opposition Bloc, or Oppo Bloc, as it was called. ''He thought to gather the largest number of people opposed to the current government, you needed to avoid anything concrete, and just become a symbol of being opposed,'' recalled Mikhail B. Pogrebinsky, a political analyst in Kiev.

The strategy worked. Under the new name, the Party of Regions kept a foothold in Parliament. Its new bloc now has 43 members in the 450-seat chamber.

It is not clear that Mr. Manafort's work in Ukraine ended with his work with Mr. Trump's campaign. A communications aide for Mr. Lyovochkin, who financed Mr. Manafort's work, declined to say whether he was still on retainer or how much he had been paid.

Mr. Manafort has not registered as a lobbyist representing Ukraine, which would require disclosing his earnings, though at least one company he subcontracted, the public relations firm Edelman, did in 2008. It received a retainer of $35,000 a month to promote Mr. Yanukovych's efforts as prime minister ''toward making Ukraine a more democratic country.''

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The Guardian

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**Donald Trump and Russia: a web that grows more tangled all the time;**

**Frank Mermoud, a key figure at the recent Republican national convention, has strong business ties with Ukraine - the latest in a series of Trump staffers with worrying links to Russia and its interests, including the candidate himself**

**BYLINE:** Peter Stone, David Smith, Ben Jacobs, Alec Luhn and Rupert Neate

**SECTION:** US NEWS

**LENGTH:** 2033 words

A key figure at the Republican national convention where Donald Trump was nominated for president has strong business ties with Ukraine, the Guardian has learned.

The party platform written at the convention in Cleveland last week removed references to arming Ukraine in its fight with Russia, which has supported separatists in eastern Ukraine. Trump's links to Russia are under scrutiny after a hack of Democratic national committee emails, allegedly by Russian agents.

Frank Mermoud also has longstanding ties to Trump's campaign chairman, **Paul Manafort**, who in 2010 helped pro-Russia Viktor Yanukovych refashion his image and win a presidential election in Ukraine. Manafort was brought in earlier this year to oversee the convention operations and its staffing.

Three sources at the convention also told the Guardian that they saw Phil Griffin, a longtime aide to Manafort in Kiev, working with the foreign dignitaries programme. "After years of working in the Ukraine for Paul and others, it was surprising to run into Phil working at the convention," one said.

Related: Cozy Bear and Fancy Bear: did Russians hack Democratic party and if so, why?

The change to the platform on arming Ukraine was condemned even by some Republicans. Senator Rob Portman described it as "deeply troubling". Veteran party operative and lobbyist Charlie Black said the "new position in the platform doesn't have much support from Republicans", adding that the change "was unusual".

Thousands of Democratic National Committee emails were hacked and published by WikiLeaks on the eve of the party's convention in Philadelphia this week. They showed that officials, who are meant to remain impartial, favoured Hillary Clinton and discussed ways to undermine her rival, Bernie Sanders. The leak led to the resignation of chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

The FBI is investigating, with all signs pointing to Russian involvement, though Moscow rejects this. Experts note Vladimir Putin's past attempts to damage western democracy, including cyber-attacks on French, Greek, Italian and Latvian elections. In 2014, malware was discovered in Ukrainian election software that would have robbed it of legitimacy.

Alina Polyakova, deputy director of the Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center at the Atlantic Council, said: "We can't say 100% that Mr Putin had a hand in any of this but this kind of meddling in other countries' affairs is part of Russia's toolkit. It's a kind of asymmetric warfare. To me, this looks like something straight from the Russian secret service playbook, but I'm surprised at how brazen they've been."

This kind of meddling in other country's affairs is part of Russia's toolkit

Alina Polyakova, Dinu Patriciu Eurasia Center

Trump and his campaign have denied any connection but on Wednesday he ignited a firestorm by calling on Russia to find 30,000 emails deleted from Clinton's private server. " I think you will probably be mightily rewarded by our press," he said. He later claimed that he was being sarcastic.

Analysts suggest three primary motivations for the email dump, quite probably overlapping: doing harm to the US political process to undermine its credibility; doing harm to Hillary Clinton (WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is no friend of hers); and boosting Trump, who has heaped praise on Putin and broke from Republican policy by suggesting that the US would not automatically come to the aid of Nato allies and saying he would consider recognising Crimea as Russian territory.

James Rubin, a former assistant secretary of state now advising the Clinton campaign, said: "If you are the president of Russia and you have stated over and over again that you are concerned that the United States - through its enlargement of Nato, through its policies in Europe towards Ukraine, towards Georgia, towards other countries in Central Asia - are putting pressure on Russia, and you are the president of a country that has been seeking to undermine that process and roll back the independent Europe that's whole and free and push it back, that's your foreign policy objective.

"So then you look at the United States and you say, well, which party's policies would be more likely to allow me to achieve my objectives? That's the way that a Russian leader would think."

With Democrats and journalists now trawling through Trump's past dealings with "all the oligarchs", as he once put it, as far back as Russia's Soviet days, the candidate repeatedly, and angrily, this week stated that he has "zero, nothing to do with Russia". But he continued to refuse to release his tax returns, which could prove his claim definitively.

Past courtships

If he doesn't have anything to do with Russia today, he certainly has in the past. Trump has attempted to build namesake branded hotels and condos in Moscow as far back as 1987 - when it was still the Soviet Union. " It's a totally interesting place," he said at the time. "I think the Soviet Union is really making an effort to cooperate in the sense of dealing openly with other nations and in opening up the country."

His desire to build a Trump Tower near Red Square continued throughout the 1990s, and in 2013 the billionaire businessman travelled to Moscow to meet Putin hoping to discuss the plan while taking in the Russian debut of Trump's Miss Universe beauty pageant.

Putin cancelled at the last minute, according to the Washington Post, but sent a gift and personal note. While Trump didn't get to meet Putin on the trip, he did collect a reported $14m from Aras Agalarov, a Azerbaijani-Russian billionaire property developer and close Putin associate, and other business figures for bringing Miss Universe to Agalarov's 7,500-seat Crocus City Hall.

Trump was photographed with personalities such as the rapper Timati, who has since gone on to take an outspoken pro-Kremlin position, recording a song with the refrain " my best friend is President Putin ".

Trump was also photographed with Miss Universe jury member Philipp Kirkorov, a flamboyant pop star who represented Russia at Eurovision in 1995. Kirkorov told the Guardian that he first met Trump in 1994 when he performed at the businessman's Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City and spent time with him again in 1999 and 2013.

Kirkorov said he and Trump did not talk much about politics but rather "about life, about the beauty of Russian and American women".

"I introduced Donald to the popular Russian-Ukrainian singer Ani Lorak," Kirkorov said. "I know he's a big connoisseur of female beauty, so he talked with her a lot the whole evening.

"He understands that friendship between America and Russia will lead only to positive events and an improvement in relations between our countries will be to everyone's benefit, and I'm sure that's why he has so many fans in our country," Kirkorov said.

Agalarov is just one of several Russian billionaires tied to Trump; he boasted to Real Estate weekly: " The Russian market is attracted to me. I have a great relationship with many Russians, and almost all of the oligarchs were in the room."

On another occasion he declared: "Moscow right now in the world is a very, very important place. We wanted Moscow all the way."

Back in 2008 Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr, told a New York Russian real estate investors conference that a "lot of money [is] pouring in from Russia". "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets," he added.

A lot of the money was destined for the 46-storey Trump Soho hotel and condos project on Spring Street, which was partly funded by group of questionable Russian and ex-Soviet state billionaires. The building was embroiled in a Manhattan district attorney investigation into fraud alleged by buyers, until Trump and his partners settled out of court. There had been plans to build a replica building in Moscow. It never happened.

In 2008 Trump sold a six-acre oceanfront Palm Beach mansion for $95m - a record deal for the exclusive community that netted him $53.6m. The buyer was Russian fertiliser billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev, who was reported in the Panama Papers leaks to have used offshore law firms to hide more than $2bn of art works, including pieces by Picasso, Van Gogh and Leonardo, from his wife in advance of their divorce.

Yanukovych, Gazprom and more

For his part, Manafort has been closely tied to Ukraine over the past decade and made millions from consulting work. He worked for Rinat Akhmetov, Dmitry Firtash and **Oleg Deripaska**, three major pro-Russia oligarchs, as an adviser.

Much of Manafort's relationship with Firtash was exposed in a 2011 racketeering lawsuit that was later dismissed. It described Manafort as aiding the mogul in moving his wealth out of Ukraine and into overseas assets. Firtash is currently under indictment in the US, and Deripaska is banned from entering the country due to ties with organised crime.

Manafort's relationship with Deripaska has recently suffered as the mogul is suing Manafort in the Cayman Islands for allegedly disappearing with $19m of his money. Manafort also worked for Yanukovych and helped guide the pro-Russia candidate to victory in the 2010 Ukranian election; Yanukovych was subsequently overthrown in 2014 and is now exiled in Russia.

Another of Trump's foreign policy advisers, Carter Page, is an investment banker with close links to Gazprom, the Kremlin-controlled gas company, and has long been an outspoken supporter of Putin. He has gone so far as to compare US foreign policy towards Russia in the Obama administration to slavery in the antebellum south.

And Trump adviser Michael Flynn, a former US military intelligence chief, sat two places away from Putin at the state-funded TV network Russia Today's 10th anniversary party last year.

The web of associations between Trump and Moscow remains ambiguous and intriguing. Asked if Putin and Trump could be actively colluding, Polyakova replied: "I don't think it would be that direct. That would be stupid. Trump wants the power of denial."

Chris Coons, a Democratic senator for Delaware, said: "That seems to be a striking allegation to make because that would be unbelievably irresponsible. I have heard in the last day troubling allegations of the relationship between **Paul Manafort** and players in the Ukraine who are very closely tied to Putin and the Kremlin but I have no evidence about it."

He added: "At this point we should allow the intelligence community and our foreign policy leaders to pursue whatever leads there may be to whatever conclusion they will reach. I do think the degree of irresponsibility shown by Donald Trump in literally urging on an illegal surveillance act by a hostile foreign power raises strong enough questions that it merits investigation. It's truly unsettling and something that deserves out attention."

Related: Putin is surely backing Trump, whether or not Russia was behind DNC hack

Jim Lewis, a senior vice-president and programme director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, noted that Russians had hacked into the DNC and its Republican counterpart in both 2008 and 2012 but those did not leak. "The difference this time is the leak," Lewis said. "We can say with some certainty that it's Russian hacking, but we should be cautious about saying they were behind the leak."

Direct collusion with the Trump campaign is probably not happening, Lewis suggested. "Let's say you're working with someone in the Trump campaign. How do you communicate with them? I think it's unlikely given the practical difficulties."

Joseph Schmitz, a foreign policy adviser to Trump, denied that there was any direct relationship between the campaign and the Kremlin. "We had to negotiate with Joseph Stalin when we had a common enemy called Hitler," he said. "Bill Clinton went on vacation in Russia when he was a Rhodes scholar; that's a fact. If anyone is in bed with Russia, it's the Clintons."

But should Trump win the election, Polyakova said: "We would definitely have a closer relationship with Russia and it could endanger western security interests. I would expect a lot of appeasement when it comes to Ukraine and Syria."

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Las Vegas Review-Journal

April 30, 2016 Saturday

**Panama Papers show how Trump, others profit from his name**

**BYLINE:** Kevin G. Hall

**SECTION:** Pg. A004

**LENGTH:** 2016 words

WASHINGTON -- The leak of documents known as the Panama Papers illustrates how Donald J. Trump and others seek to profit from his name.

Trump doesn't appear to be the direct owner of any offshore company formed by Mossack Fonseca, the Panamanian law firm that is now the subject of multiple investigations after its documents were leaked to journalists. The firm has a Las Vegas subsidiary.

The Trump name shows up on 3,540 of those leaked documents, many shedding light on what has become a business model. Some of his associates and business partners are also in the files.

Early in his career, Trump developed properties. Over the decades, he has increasingly let others invest the capital and take the risks. He sells them his name and reputation, and is paid millions in return.

That's the case with the Trump Ocean Club International Hotel & Tower in Panama. In the law firm's files, it is the most frequent association with Trump's name, since his business partners in the project appear as buyers of condo units, some of whom create offshore shell companies with Mossack Fonseca for the purchase.

More on that shortly.

McClatchy's reporters are among 400 journalists across the globe coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists that are searching the leaked law firm's documents. The 11.5 million files contain emails, financial information, passports and incorporation papers for offshore companies.

The Republican presidential candidate has disclosed that he has 515 companies, with 378 registered in Delaware, he said last week while campaigning.

In many cases, others, such as Trump, seek to capitalize on his famous name.

Trump Wise Investment Ltd. was created by the Hong Kong business Instant Companies Limited and registered in the British Virgin Islands from 1998 to late 2005. The secret documents show Mossack Fonseca did not even know who the shareholders were.

Similarly, Trump World Capital Ltd. in the British Virgin Islands was opened in late 2006 by Mossack Fonseca's Singapore office. It remains active, with shareholders listing addresses in Palembang, Indonesia. One shareholder is a young woman whose LinkedIn profile describes her as merchandising supervisor at a small clothing retailer.

Neither of these appear to be connected to Trump in any way.

Trump is distinctive because his name, in many ways, is actually his business. His name is a brand, synonymous with luxury and brashness. The simple use of his name garners licensing fees and royalties. Panama offered him entry into a new line of business for the Trump empire -- waterfront resorts in Central America.

In a promotional video ahead of the opening on July 6, 2011, Trump said he fell in love with the country during one of the Miss Universe contests he owned.

"And we're now doing a great, great project in Panama that's selling like hotcakes, and I think it's one of the most beautiful buildings in the world," Trump said, speaking in the collective and sounding like an investor. "So I'm really honored to be involved in Panama."

However, the fine print on the resort's webpage reveals the hallmark of Trump's business model.

"Trump Ocean Club International Hotel & Tower Panama is not owned, developed or sold by Donald J. Trump, the Trump Organization or any of their principals or affiliates," it reads. "Newland International Properties, Corp., the owner and developer of the property, uses the 'Trump' name and mark under license from Trump Marks Panama LLC, which license may be terminated or revoked according to its terms."

Newland, the project developer, paid Trump for the right to have his name splashed all over the 70-story mega condo, hotel, marina and casino constructed in the shape of a massive sail. A draft contract found in the secret files suggests Trump also gets from Newland a small percentage from every condo sold, something later confirmed by the original developer.

To ensure that the hotel meets his quality standards, Delaware-based Trump Panama Hotel Management LLC manages the hotel operations. And K Group, owned by developer Newland, pays Trump Marks Panama about $5 million annually for the Trump name, the candidate's financial disclosures show.

"You know Donald Trump. First it's we, we, we, we, but after a while it's me, me, me, me," said Roger Khafif, who had the vision for the project and ran the company that developed the Trump resort. "That's the art of the deal."

Newland raised about $220 million in bond sales to fund the resort's construction, but the bonds were downgraded just months after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. By 2013, the developer of the luxury resort that bore Trump's name -- despite his having little financial investment -- filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection to restructure what it owed bondholders.

The bankruptcy affected Trump's licensing fees, according to an Oct. 11, 2015, report by the Associated Press that said Trump's total payout remained between $32 million and $55 million. The upper-end figure suggests his payment consumed a quarter of the money raised from the bonds.

Fernando March, an Ecuador-based investment banker and CEO of S&amp;F Managers LTD, used Mossack Fonseca to create a trust so investors could contribute to projects such as one in Cartagena, Colombia. He asked Trump to invest in a multi-use development that included two hotels, condos and a golf course.

March said he met twice with Trump in 2013 but the billionaire wasn't willing to invest any money. He did offer the use of his name -- for a fee. March even offered to change the posh Delano or Mondrian Hotels into a Trump-named hotel.

"He was not willing to invest and at that time we needed someone to put the money down," said March. "We were not willing to use his name without any money. That is the kind of business he would love to do."

Over decades Trump has built a sprawling global real-estate empire, along with clothing lines and even a now-defunct university program that bears his name. So it's no surprise that his business partners might appear in the documents that leaked from Mossack Fonseca.

Much like Hillary Clinton, the subject of an earlier Panama Papers story by McClatchy, Trump's ties to people in the documents or their offshore companies are indirect. Like Clinton, he's associated with people who turn up in the offshore world.

Vincent H.S. Lo appears in the documents. The Hong Kong businessman is seen as a Trump-like Asian celebrity businessman. Like Trump, Lo had his own TV show, called "The Winner." He made a fortune developing China's business capital of Shanghai.

A decade ago, Trump sued Lo for $1 billion over the sale of a Manhattan property they jointly owned. The sale in 2005 was at the time viewed as the biggest residential retail sale in New York history, and Trump thought the $1.76 billion sale price was too low.

Lo's company, Shui On, owns SOCAM Development Limited, which operates an active offshore company in the Bahamas called T.H. Industrial Management Limited that was registered in 1994. SOCAM officials did not return emails requesting comment.

Camilo Benedetti, an investment banker for one of Trump's partners, Yun Capital Group, provided his passport to Mossack Fonseca to create what his lawyer called "a virtual office." Often offshore companies use virtual offices to give the appearance of a brick-and-mortar company. Calls and emails to company officials in Hong Kong and New York weren't returned.

Yun Capital Group, a frequent partner on Trump projects around the world, and Trump are partnering on a planned luxury tower in Bogota.

Trump's campaign declined to comment about his partners or his business practices.

Having associations with business people who use the offshore world won't likely damage Trump politically, said Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute.

That, said Tanner, is because "essentially he's running on, 'I'm a rich guy and I know rich guys.' He's not trying to hide it in any way."

Offshore shell companies are legal and have legal uses. But they can often be abused, as the leaked documents show, for everything from laundering drug money to hiding the fruits of corruption and tax evasion.

Former partners and associates of Trump campaign strategist **Paul Manafort**, a lawyer and lobbyist, appear in the Panama Papers, too. One is Russian aluminum magnate **Oleg Deripaska**, currently suing Manafort and investment partners in a Cayman Islands court over a $26 million offshore entity that went bust about eight years ago.

"He and others gave deposition testimony last year under the auspices of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, at the request of a Cayman Islands court," Richard Hibey, Manafort's lawyer, confirmed, adding Manafort has never done business through Mossack Fonseca. "The proceeding in the Virginia federal court is 'terminated.'"

The documents show Deripaska as the true owner of Batu Mining Limited, an offshore company opened in the British Virgin Islands in 2003 and designed, the documents said, for investments in the Mongolian coal mining business. Attempts to reach Deripaska through his website and a Cyprus firm handling his offshore went unanswered.

A 2009 British lawsuit names Ziad Takieddine, a Franco-Lebanese businessman, as the owner of an offshore company called Warwick Estates Limited in the British Virgin Islands. The lawsuit, found in Mossack Fonseca files, suggests the offshore was a holding company for pricey London property.

Manafort and Takieddine have become involved with an investigation of an ongoing scandal in France from 1995. The inquiry was about arm sales and the campaign funds of former French President Edoard Balladur, who Manafort was then advising.

"(Manafort) was interviewed by USDOJ (Justice Department) at the request of the French authorities. He was thanked for his cooperation. Nothing more transpired," Hibey said, denying Manafort had any relationship with Takieddine.

Trump partners or customers who appear in the leak of Mossack Fonseca documents now avoid association with the beleaguered Panamanian law firm.

Khafif's, the resort developer, appears by name 118 times in the leak, mostly in contracts for the purchase of specific units. Khafif is working on the other side of Mossack Fonseca lawyers to close the sale.

"That's it. We have no relationship with Mossack Fonseca," said Khafif insisted. "I don't know them."

But the buyers of these units, some of them Americans, are often using offshore companies set up by Mossack Fonseca. Payments are sometimes made through the firm's trust service.

One such offshore company was Trump Ocean Club Unit 2710 Inc., registered on May 7, 2007. Its shareholders include Connecticut lawyer Carlton Hume, who couldn't remember why he and partners tapped Mossack Fonseca to create his offshore company before the project was built.

"They were obviously pitching stuff to folks in the U.S. to buy in their development," Hume said. "If I had to guess, I would guess that it was the developer who recommended them to us."

While the documents show they formed an offshore company in Panama to buy the unit, Hume said they backed out when the project appeared to be in trouble.

An industrial engineer, Carlos Saravia was Newland's chief operating officer for the Trump-named Panama resort project. Reached by phone, the Colombian businessman first denied ever working with the Panama Papers law firm.

But when confronted with his email exchanges with Mossack Fonseca lawyer Ramses Owens, Saravia offered that maybe the Panamanian firm pitched its services to the Trump-named project.

"Because they offered, and we received them, and we heard them out and that's it," he said. "We solicited bids from various Panamanian firms."

The emails show Saravia reached out to Mossack Fonseca, even agreeing to pay travel expenses up to $2,500 for each of two Mossack Fonseca lawyers.

After internal debate about who should go, Owens responded to Saravia. "We've talked about this with the upper management. It will be a great pleasure visiting you in Colombia," he said.

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The Washington Post

April 27, 2016 Wednesday

Met 2 Edition

**Trump adviser's foreign financial deals led to disputes**

**BYLINE:** Steven Mufson;Tom Hamburger

**SECTION:** A-SECTION; Pg. A04

**LENGTH:** 2268 words

**Paul Manafort** was hired by Donald Trump to bring the wisdom of an old Washington hand to a campaign of political novices and provide expertise on the arcane art of counting convention delegates.

But beneath the image of a campaign wise man is a more complex picture of a veteran consultant who has pursued parallel careers as a lobbyist, political adviser and global dealmaker. He has parlayed political relationships around the world into an array of intricate financial transactions with billionaire oligarchs and other controversial investors that have at times spurred legal disputes.

In one case, Manafort tried unsuccessfully to build a luxury high-rise in Manhattan with money from a billionaire backer of a Ukrainian president whom he had advised.

In another deal, real estate records show that Manafort took out and later repaid a $250,000 loan from a Middle Eastern arms dealer at the center of a French inquiry into whether kickbacks were paid to leading politicians in a 1995 presidential campaign.

And in another business venture, a Russian aluminum magnate has accused Manafort in a Cayman Islands court of taking nearly $19 million intended for investments, then failing to account for the funds, return them or respond to numerous inquiries about exactly how the money was used.

At one point, attorneys for the Russian businessman, **Oleg Deripaska**, claimed that they could not locate Manafort or his partner, Richard Gates. The tycoon hired a private investigator to track them down, according to a 2014 petition that Deripaska's attorneys filed in a Cayman Islands court seeking recovery of the money.

"It appears that **Paul Manafort** and Rick Gates have simply disappeared," the petition states.

Manafort's attorney, Richard Hibey, did not respond to repeated Washington Post requests for comment on the current status of the Cayman Islands dispute.

Court records show that, as of August 2015, seven years after Deripaska requested his money back, the Russian businessman was still seeking to recover the funds. A Deripaska representative said last week that the matter still angers Deripaska and that the tycoon's "accountants and lawyers are looking at this right now."

Manafort, 67, is in many ways a natural choice to be Trump's top campaign adviser. His firm was hired by Trump in the mid-1980s to lobby on gambling and real estate issues, said Manafort's former business partner Charlie Black. In addition, Manafort has owned an apartment in Trump Tower since January 2015, property records show. And another former Manafort business partner, Roger Stone, has been an informal adviser to Trump for years.

More than many traditional political consultants, Manafort has demonstrated a willingness to forge unconventional alliances and cut deals in a way that makes him well suited to help Trump secure the nomination in a fractured GOP.

Manafort, whose father owned a real estate company and served three terms as mayor of the family's home town of New Britain, Conn., began his Washington career in 1975 as associate director for personnel in President Gerald Ford's White House. He gained quick respect in the party in 1976, when he helped Ford secure the nomination during a contested convention. He worked later as a convention adviser to the presidential campaigns of Ronald Reagan and Bob Dole.

Manafort also built a high-powered lobbying practice that did not shy from clients others shunned. They included two corrupt dictators, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, both of whom stole billions of dollars from their countries.

Manafort's international work and globe-trotting ways have prompted some friends to call him "the Count of Monte Cristo," a reference to the swashbuckling hero of the 19th-century French novel.

Several of Manafort's former campaign colleagues said they admired Manafort's international work and pointed out that some of Manafort's clients, such as Marcos and Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, were backed by the Reagan administration.

"Paul had a great career overseas," said GOP strategist Scott Reed. "He was very successful. He offered a lot of good advice, and he made a lot of money - and there's nothing wrong with that."

Black, the former Manafort business partner, called Manafort "a brilliant guy" and recalled how he had taken a keen interest in overseas work.

Manafort and Gates, who also works for the Trump campaign, did not respond to requests for comment, and Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks declined to make either available or to provide a comment on behalf of Trump.

Manafort's attorney also declined to answer detailed questions regarding his client's career.

The relationship with Deripaska started on a positive note.

The firm of Davis Manafort, which Manafort owned with Gates and longtime Republican strategist Richard Davis, wooed Deripaska in 2006, describing its experience in "international and domestic business, politics, government and public policy development," according to the Cayman Islands petition filed on behalf of Deripaska.

They told Deripaska their goal was to set up a $200 million fund to make a series of private-equity investments and acquisitions, primarily in Russia and Ukraine, according to the petition. The partnership making the investments was created in the Cayman Islands in 2007 and dubbed Pericles Emerging Market Investors, borrowing the name of the ancient Athenian statesman and general.

Deripaska already knew Davis, who with Manafort had helped arrange meetings for him with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) in January and August 2006 as McCain prepared to run for president. Deripaska was interested in building his contacts in the United States, which in July 2006 revoked his visa. The Wall Street Journal reported at the time that his visa was pulled amid concerns that he might be linked to organized crime, something he has vigorously denied. He later received visas to travel to the United States.

Deripaska made his investment through a firm called Surf Horizon, a company incorporated in Cyprus in July 2007. He disclosed his ownership of Surf in a Hong Kong stock exchange filing, and a Deripaska representative confirmed his ownership to The Post. The Cayman Islands petition said that Surf and another company controlled by Deripaska also paid $7.5 million in management fees to an entity controlled by Davis, Gates and Manafort.

Deripaska expected the funds would be used to make acquisitions in Russia, Ukraine and other countries in eastern and southern Europe, according to his Cayman Islands petition. The court filing describes a complicated business plan in which Manafort and his partners would establish companies in Cyprus known as "special purpose vehicles" for tax and regulatory purposes.

Instead, the petition argues, the partnership said it made only one purchase - buying a stake in Ukrainian cable television and Internet ventures.

Deripaska, squeezed by the 2008 credit crunch, asked for the partnership to be liquidated and his money returned, according to Deripaska's petition. But the filing said it was not clear who was controlling the Ukrainian cable TV and Internet assets and what happened to the money Deripaska initially provided.

In 2014, Deripaska was still looking to get his money, prompting his attorneys to file the Cayman Islands petition.

By that time, Manafort's apparent absence from Washington had become something of a joke among his friends. A Politico story in March 2014 noted that some were wondering where Manafort, a "mystery man," was hiding.

In August 2015, Deripaska's attorneys, using a legal provision allowing U.S. discovery for legal proceedings in foreign courts, asked a federal district court in Virginia to order documents and depositions from Manafort, Gates and Davis.

In the filing, Deripaska's team argued that Gates had in 2008 promised an audit of the fund but that none had been produced. In addition, beyond initial assurances that the transactions had been successful, Davis, Gates and Manafort had "provided no additional updates," the petition said.

A week after the petition was filed in Virginia, Judge Gerald Bruce Lee issued an order allowing Deripaska's team to move ahead. Arlington, Va.-based private investigator Deborah C. Martin filed documents with the court showing that subpoenas were delivered to Gates at his Richmond home and to the wife of Davis at their home. Martin made no mention in her court filings of Manafort. She declined to comment to The Post.

Davis did not respond to The Post's requests for comment. He told Yahoo News, which first reported on the dispute in a story published late Tuesday, that he had nothing to do with Deripaska's investment and that he has not spoken with Manafort in more than five years. Davis said that when he learned that the Cayman Islands court wanted his testimony, "I was like, what the f--- is this?"

The current status of the dispute is not clear from court records, and attorneys for Manafort and Deripaska declined to elaborate.

In another case, Manafort's business was more personal.

Real estate records show that in 2004, Manafort secured a $250,000 loan from Middle Eastern arms dealer Abdul Rahman al-Assir, using his Fairfax County, Va., home as collateral. The records show that Manafort paid off the debt in July 2015.

Assir and Manafort became friendly in the 1990s, when Manafort's firm represented a Texas-based petroleum engineering firm that Assir owned, recalled Black, Manafort's former lobbying partner.

Attempts to reach Assir were not successful.

Manafort and Assir have come under scrutiny in France amid a long-running, complex scandal known as "Karachi-gate." According to French news accounts, investigators are probing whether funds from the 1994 sale of French-made attack submarines to Pakistan were diverted to the 1995 presidential campaign of Ã[0/00]douard Balladur, who was prime minister at the time. French media, citing witness testimony, reported that Manafort at the time was providing consulting and polling services to Balladur.

One question under review, according to Agence France-Presse, is whether Manafort was paid by Assir using the money from the submarine sale. Balladur has denied wrongdoing and has said he does not recall Manafort working for him.

In 2013, Manafort provided a deposition in the case, according to a report in the French newspaper Libération. Hibey, Manafort's attorney, said Manafort "was interviewed, was thanked for his cooperation, and nothing further regarding Mr. Manafort has transpired."

Another case, in which Manafort tried to develop a 65-story Manhattan luxury apartment building in 2008, illustrates how he has tapped into his global political relationships to pursue financial deals.

In a bid to build the $850 million project on the site of the historic Drake Hotel, Manafort relied in part on funds from Dmitry Firtash, a Ukrainian energy tycoon with a history of legal troubles around the world.

Manafort's role in the deal was detailed in documents submitted as part of a 2011 New York lawsuit in which a former Ukrainian prime minister accused Firtash of working with Manafort and others to invest ill-gotten profits from energy transactions in Ukraine. Attorneys for Manafort and Firtash's energy company argued for the lawsuit's swift dismissal. Hibey, who represented Manafort and other American defendants, argued in a filing that the lawsuit was based on "speculative assertions unsupported by any genuine factual allegations."

The lawsuit was dismissed for lack of evidence. But the case left a trail of correspondence between Firtash company executives and Manafort and Gates that provide a glimpse into the world of Manafort and his partners.

Manafort and Firtash met in the early 2000s, the lawsuit contends, at a time when Manafort was doing political consulting for Viktor Yanukovych, who would later become Ukraine's president. Firtash had been a supporter. Some in the West felt Yanukovych could be an ally, but ultimately he pursued ties to Russia and fled Ukraine amid violent clashes.

Manafort met with Firtash in May, June and August of 2008 to seal the Manhattan real estate deal, according to a memo by Gates. Firtash had agreed to put $112 million into buying the Drake Hotel, tearing it down and building a new luxury skyscraper, to be called the Bulgari Tower.

Manafort emailed his partners in August 2008 describing an idea for two separate real estate funds, one to focus on distressed real estate in the United States and the other to seize opportunities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

In the end, the apartment project fell through as the economy plunged into recession.

Prior to joining Trump's campaign, Manafort had operated largely out of the limelight. But he once explained his approach to business during public testimony to Congress. Lawmakers in 1989 were probing a deal of Manafort's that involved federal low-cost-housing subsidies.

Manafort's firm had lobbied to obtain about $43 million in Department of Housing and Urban Development subsidies for a New Jersey housing project - while holding an option to purchase a stake in the project. The firm invested before the subsidies were announced. Manafort said that after talking to a senior HUD official, he had "a high degree of expectation" the subsidies would be approved.

"The technical term for what we do and what law firms, associations and professional groups do is 'lobbying,' " Manafort said. "For purposes of today, I will admit that, in a narrow sense, some people might term it 'influence peddling.' "

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Alice Crites contributed to this report.

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U.S. Newswire

June 6, 2008 Friday 10:28 AM EST

**DNC Releases New Video: 'McCain's Lobbyist Friends'**

**SECTION:** POLITICAL EDITORS

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**DATELINE:** WASHINGTON, June 6

As Democrats are joining together to reduce the influence of lobbyists on our political process, the Democratic National Committee today issued a new web ad highlighting Senator McCain's hypocrisy on lobbying reform and transparency. The new video, entitled "McCain's Lobbyist Friends," outlines the degree to which Senator McCain's inner circle has been dominated by the sort of Washington lobbyists he once railed against and the disturbing array of foreign clients they have represented --including companies doing business in Iran, the oppressive regime in Myanmar, and some of history's most brutal tyrants.

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080519/DNCLOGO )

Out on the campaign trail, Senator McCain has promised to "set a new standard for transparency and accountability" and attempted to position himself as a champion of lobbying reform. But back in Washington, Senator McCain and his lobbyist advisors are running one of the least transparent campaigns in history. Not only does Senator McCain refuse to allow reporters to cover his fundraisers, but he has released fewer tax returns than any party nominee in decades.

"While Senator McCain talks about transparency and accountability on the campaign trail, back home in Washington he and the lobbyists in his inner circle refuse to apply those same standards to his own campaign," said DNC Communications Director Karen Finney. "Senator Obama and the Democratic Party have promised to change the way business is done in Washington and are taking real steps to ensure that the American people's priorities dominate the agenda in Washington. If Senator McCain is serious about his call to clean up Washington, he should join us. Otherwise, Senator McCain is once again showing why he is the wrong choice for America's future."

To view the DNC's new video, "McCain's Lobbyist Friends," click here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGXIuNthJ7Q

DNC Web Ad:"McCain's Lobbyist Friends" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGXIuNthJ7Q

SCRIPT:

John McCain says he'll take on lobbyists.

But, his inner circle is full of lobbyists:

Charlie Black, Chief Campaign Advisor

Doug Goodyear, Convention CEO

Tom Loeffler, National Co-Chair

Rick Davis, Campaign Manager

Randy Scheunemann, Top Foreign Policy Advisor

And who have they represented?

Anti-Western Political Partiesâ€¦

Mob-Connected Russian Oligarchsâ€¦

The Saudi Royal Familyâ€¦

Companies doing business in Iranâ€¦

The Brutal Myanmar Juntaâ€¦

â€¦and some of history's Most Brutal Tyrants.

John McCain and His Lobbyist Friends: The Wrong Choice for America's Future.

AD BACK UP: JOHN MCCAIN'S LOBBYIST FRIENDS

Anti-Western Political Partiesâ€¦

Campaign Manager Rick Davis's Firm Represented Anti-Western Political Party in Ukraine. "A consultant to Sen. John McCain hired a public-relations firm last year to burnish the U.S. image of a Ukrainian political party backed by Russian leader Vladimir Putin, according to documents filed with the Justice Department. The lobbying firm of Davis Manafort Inc. arranged for the public-relations firm's work through an affiliate last spring, at the same time Davis Manafort was being paid by the Republican presidential candidate's campaign. The firm is co-owned by lobbyist Rick Davis, manager of Sen. McCain's presidential campaign, and longtime Republican strategist **Paul Manafort**." [Wall Street Journal, 5/14/08]

Mob-Connected Russian Oligarchsâ€¦

Davis Introduced McCain to Putin-Ally, Mafia-Linked Russian Oligarch. While seeking to do business with him, McCain campaign manager Rick Davis - while simultaneously at the Reform Institute and lobbying for Davis Manafort - introduced McCain to **Oleg Deripaska,** a Putin ally whose U.S. visa was revoked due to suspicions over his ties to Russian organized crime. McCain, Deripaska and Davis rendezvoused at least twice - first in January 2006 in Davos, then during a codel in Montenegro in August 2006. [Washington Post, 1/25/08]

The Saudi Royal Familyâ€¦

Former Campaign Finance Chair Tom Loeffler Lobbied McCain for Saudi Clients. "But the fallout may not be over. One top campaign official affected by the new policy is national finance co-chair Tom Loeffler, a former Texas congressman whose lobbying firm has collected nearly $15 million from Saudi Arabia since 2002 and millions more from other foreign and corporate interests, including a French aerospace firm seeking Pentagon contracts. Loeffler last month told a reporter 'at no time have I discussed my clients with John McCain.' But lobbying disclosure records reviewed by NEWSWEEK show that on May 17, 2006, Loeffler listed meeting McCain along with the Saudi ambassador to 'discuss US-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia relations.'" [Newsweek, 5/26/08: http://www.newsweek.com/id/137522]

Companies doing business in Iranâ€¦

McCain Campaign Manager Rick Davis Represented Ukrainian Companies Doing Business in Iran. "Before Rick Davis began serving as John McCain's campaign manager, his lobbying firm had a pretty cosmopolitan set of clients. For example, Ukranian billionaire Rinat Akhmetov, who has several business links to Iranâ€¦ Davis Manafort was helping Akhmetov's conglomerate, System Capital Management Holdings, to develop a "corporate communications strategy" between the beginning of 2005 through the end of summer 2005, the company said. The company's subsidiary, Metinvest, a steel company, has one of its 11 offices in Tehran. And another subsidiary, Khartsyzsk Pipe Plant, sells large pipes to Iran. Those business ties go back to at least 2005, when Davis Manafort was working for the company, according to a handful of stories in business publications like the Russia & CIS Metals and Mining Weekly and the Mining and the Metals report, which we found on Nexis." [TPM, 5/30/08: http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2008/05/before\_rick\_davis\_began\_servin.php]

The Brutal Myanmar Juntaâ€¦

Doug Goodyear Left Campaign After Revelations His Firm Represented Myanmar Regime. "The man picked by the John McCain campaign to run the 2008 Republican National Convention resigned Saturday after a report that his lobbying firm used to represent the military regime in Myanmar. Doug Goodyear resigned as coordinator of the Twin Cities convention and issued a two-sentence statement." [Associated Press, 5/11/08]

Goodyear and Doug Davenport, Regional Campaign Manager, Tied to Oppressive Myanmar Junta. "ABC News' Jan Simmonds reports: Two of Sen. John McCain' campaign aides resigned this weekend after media reports brought to light their ties to a lobbying group that once represented the military junta of Burma, which the regime calls Myanmar. The aides, Douglas Goodyear, who was tapped as the GOP Convention Coordinator, and Doug Davenport, a regional manager focusing on the mid-Atlantic states, both worked for DCI. The firm was hired in 2002 to represent Burma's military junta to try to begin a dialogue of political reconciliation with the United States." [ABCNews.com, 5/11/08]

â€¦ and some of history's Most Brutal Tyrants.

Charlie Black Pioneered the "Revolving Door Between Campaign Consulting and Lobbying." "Then in his 30s, Black already had established himself as a pioneer of the revolving door between campaign consulting and lobbying, having been a senior adviser on President Ronald Reagan's reelection campaign before returning to K Street. And his clients, as often as not, were foreign leaders eager to burnish their reputationsâ€¦ The lobbying shop represented Bethlehem Steel, the Tobacco Institute and the government of the Philippines. The political consulting firm helped elect a slew of lawmakers -- including Sens. Phil Gramm, Jesse Helms, Charles McC. Mathias Jr., Arlen Specter, Paula Hawkins and David F. Durenberger -- who worked on legislation that directly impacted the firm's clients." [Washington Post, 5/22/08]

"Longtime Uber-Lobbyist" Helped Burnish Reputations of Some of the World's Worst Tyrants." "Longtime uber-lobbyist Charles R. Black Jr. is John McCain's man in Washington, a political maestro who is hoping to guide his friend, the senator from Arizona, to the presidency this November. But for half a decade in the 1980s, Black was also Jonas Savimbi's man in the capital city. His lobbying firm received millions from the brutal Angolan guerrilla leader and took advantage of Black's contacts in Congress and the White House." [Washington Post, 5/22/08]

Black's Client List a Whose Who of Repressive Rulers. "In addition to Savimbi, Black and his partners were at times registered foreign agents for a remarkable collection of U.S.-backed foreign leaders whose human rights records were sometimes harshly criticized, even as their opposition to communism was embraced by American conservatives. They included Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Nigerian Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre, and the countries of Kenya and Equatorial Guinea, among others." [Washington Post, 5/22/08]

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SOURCE Democratic National Committee

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Creators Syndicate

May 21, 2008 Wednesday

**SECTION:** MCCAIN'S SHOCKING DISCOVERY

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Disturbed by troubling connections and unflattering publicity, John McCain has just purged several prominent Washington lobbyists from his presidential campaign. Surely his intentions are laudable, but if Sen. McCain is consistent in ridding his campaign of such compromised people, he will find himself riding lonesome on the Straight Talk Express. That's because nearly all of his advisers, fundraisers and top staffers have worked on K Street, starting with his campaign manager, Rick Davis, and his senior adviser and spokesman, Charles Black.

From the beginning, the McCain team has been thoroughly infested with representatives of corporate special interests, from the campaign's national co-chairs, finance chairs, policy and political directors, and deputies of all descriptions down to the chairman of Young Professionals for McCain, who just happens to lobby for Airbus, the European aviation firm that benefited from the Arizona senator's long inquest against Boeing.

Perhaps the senator hasn't been paying attention for the past few decades, for he somehow seems to have surrounded himself with exactly the kind of Washington hustlers he professes to despise. How this happened is a question that Sen. McCain must answer for himself. What must be truly impressive to anyone glancing over the résumés of Davis and Black, as well as the lesser members of the McCain entourage, is their magnetic attraction for the most questionable clients in the world.

Consider Charlie Black, a longtime Republican operative, whose lobbying activities first drew negative attention during the Reagan administration, when he represented such august figures as Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Angolan rebel Jonas Savimbi. Marcos and Mobutu were infamous despots with a penchant for looting their own nations' economies, as well as any American aid that came their way (presumably as a result of Black's assistance). The theft of funds from taxpayers by those two crooks eventually mounted into the billions, and they savagely repressed democratic forces with U.S. arms. As for Savimbi, he was merely an authoritarian thug, a Maoist ideologue and, according to some reports, a sometime cannibal.

We safely can assume that Black never returned any of the stolen blood money that paid for his services. Recently, he has suggested that U.S. government support for those dictatorial regimes somehow justified his profiteering, as if he weren't involved in shoring up that support.

Meanwhile, Davis was toiling in the Reagan White House as a cabinet functionary, where his jobs included liaison with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, site of a major domestic looting scandal during those years. When he testified about his role in those events, his recollections of the influence peddling that had given housing contracts to well-connected Republicans were dim at best. But when he left the public payroll, he landed at the lobbying firm of **Paul Manafort,** who had gotten one of the most profitable of the HUD sweetheart deals for a $30 million development in New Jersey.

Aside from the usual roster of deep-pocketed corporations paying to have their way with Congress, the White House, and the federal agencies - which horrifies Sen. McCain, lest anybody forget - the McCain advisers have attracted a number of particularly noisome accounts.

For several years, Davis represented GTech, the lottery and gambling conglomerate that has been embroiled in bribery scandals in several countries, including the United States. During that same period, his firm also represented the government of Nigeria, among the most flamboyantly corrupt regimes in the world, at the time under the boot heel of the murderous Gen. Sani Abacha.

More recently, he has cultivated the business of **Oleg Deripaska**, the Russian mega-billionaire, who made his fortune by seizing control of Russia's aluminum industry during the violent "Aluminum Wars." That history earned him a reputation as an unscrupulous mafioso and put him on the State Department's visa watch list until certain American lobbyists fixed the problem. According to The Washington Post, Davis arranged at least two meetings in Europe between Deripaska, a close ally of Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, and Sen. McCain, a critic of Putin's oligarchic and undemocratic government.

These episodes scarcely begin to describe the careers of Davis, Black and their colleagues on the McCain team. They've put lipstick on a lot of pigs.

But the question is why, at this late date, the Republican nominee-in-waiting is pretending to be shocked by "conflicts of interest" in which he stands neck deep and why he dismisses four or five lobbyists while keeping dozens of others, including his top advisers, because they claim to be "retired" or on "leaves of absence" from their businesses. He knows that a press release won't change the habits of a lifetime in Washington's corrupt corporate culture, but apparently he hopes we will think so.

Joe Conason writes for the New York Observer (www.observer.com). To find out more about Joe Conason, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.

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The Associated Press

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**How lobbyists help ex-Soviets woo Washington**

**BYLINE:** By GLENN R. SIMPSON

**SECTION:** BUSINESS NEWS

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Former Federal Bureau of Investigation director William Sessions once condemned Russia's rising mafia. "We can beat organized crime," he told a Moscow security conference in 1997.

Today, Mr. Sessions is a lawyer for one of the FBI's "Most Wanted": Semyon Mogilevich, a Ukraine-born Russian whom the FBI says is one of Russia's most powerful organized-crime figures.

Mr. Sessions is trying to negotiate a deal with the U.S. Department of Justice for his client, who is charged with racketeering and is a key figure in a separate Justice Department probe of energy deals between Russia and Ukraine.

A number of notable Washington insiders are earning big fees these days by representing controversial clients from the former Soviet Union.

From prominent businessmen some facing criminal allegations to top politicians, well-known ex-Soviets are lining up to hire help with criminal cases, lobbying and consulting. These figures, many of whom made fortunes in the wide-open 1990s amid the Soviet Union's disintegration, hire Washington insiders to help rehabilitate their reputations in the West or to persuade investors and regulators they are committed to good corporate governance.

Sensitive foreign clients are nothing new for Washington's lobbying industry. Among others, Jack Abramoff convicted of fraud and bribery last year represented clients in Pakistan and Russia, while former Liberian President Charles Taylor, awaiting trial on war-crimes allegations, once employed his own Washington lobbyist.

But recent years have seen a growing number of former Soviet officials and industrialists seeking assistance in the U.S. capital. Many are playing an increasingly important role in the global economy, as they wrest ever-greater control of Eurasia's vast energy reserves and other natural resources. All have become politically powerful in their home countries as well, making them and by extension their U.S. advisers key players in Western efforts to promote regional stability.

Among recent examples:

For a $560,000 fee, Bob Dole, the former Senate majority leader and 1996 Republican presidential nominee, helped a Russian billionaire accused by rivals of bribery obtain a visa to visit the U.S. in 2005, among other things.

Leonid Reiman, a powerful member of Russia's cabinet and close ally of President Vladimir Putin, uses a Washington public-relations consultant. Mr. Reiman is under federal investigation in the U.S. over money laundering and is locked in a high-stakes battle with Moscow conglomerate Alfa for control of a Russian telecommunications empire. Alfa has paid Barbour Griffith & Rogers the influential lobbying firm co-founded by Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour nearly $2 million in lobbying fees.

**Paul Manafort**, a former adviser to Mr. Dole's presidential campaign, has advised a Ukrainian metals billionaire and his close political ally, Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. Mr. Yanukovich, who favors closer ties with Mr. Putin's administration, is embroiled in a power struggle with pro-Western Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko.

In some cases, the details of how these ex-Soviet clients made their fortunes are murky and the source, amount and purpose of the fees they pay Washington consultants can be as well. In 2005, for example, Ukrainian politician Yuri Boyko used a Caribbean shell company to pay a Washington lobbyist for help arranging meetings with top Republicans.

Mr. Boyko, currently Ukraine's minister of energy, was the architect of gas deals between Russia and Ukraine now being investigated by the U.S. Justice Department for possible ties to the alleged mafia client of Mr. Sessions. Mr. Boyko said the $98,000 in fees was paid by a small political party he heads. Annex Holdings, the Caribbean firm that paid Mr. Boyko's lobbyist, also had a stake in the gas deals, corporate records show.

At times, even clients' names are camouflaged by lobbyists despite federal laws making clear that they aren't allowed to disguise identities by taking fees from intermediaries. Without such rules, says prominent Washington ethics lawyer Jan Baran, "you would just have a bunch of shell organizations identified as clients of lobbyists and lobbying firms."

In 2004, for instance, a United Kingdom shell company called Foruper Ltd., which had no assets or employees, paid Barbour Griffith $820,000. Foruper was established by an attorney who structured the natural-gas deals being investigated by the U.S. Justice Department. Prosecutors are investigating whether there are ties between the attorney who set up Foruper and Mr. Mogilevich, Mr. Sessions's client.

In its filings, Barbour Griffith said the fees were for "promotion of greater cooperation and financial ties between Eastern Europe and the West."

In 2002 and 2003, a group called "Friends of Ukraine" paid Barbour Griffith $320,000. Tax records show that Friends of Ukraine, which no longer exists, was headquartered at Barbour Griffith's own office in Washington. The group's chairman was firm partner Lanny Griffith. Mr. Griffith said in an email that the firm as a policy doesn't discuss client matters but added that Barbour Griffith "has been scrupulous in our compliance" with laws governing the disclosure of lobbying clients.

Barbour Griffith is locked in a legal battle with associates of Mr. Reiman, the Russian minister, whose Washington adviser is a former Wall Street Journal reporter named Mark D'Anastasio. Mr. D'Anastasio said he once helped Mr. Reiman as a favor to a friend but doesn't work for him.

Longstanding federal laws require Americans to register with the federal government if they do lobbying or public-relations work for foreign clients. But details in those filings often offer only a vague sense of the work being done.

Mr. Dole, for instance, disclosed in lobby filings with the U.S. Senate his work for Russian billionaire **Oleg Deripaska**. He described it as involving "U.S. Department of State visa policies and procedures."

Mr. Deripaska, who has close ties to the Kremlin, emerged from Russia's "aluminum wars" of the 1990s with a virtual monopoly on the nation's aluminum production.

Mr. Deripaska has long been dogged by allegations from business rivals in courts in the U.S. and U.K. that he used bribery, intimidation and violence to amass his fortune. Those accusations, which he denies, have never been substantiated and no criminal charges have been filed. But for years they helped keep the State Department from granting him a visa.

In 2003, the Russian industrialist paid $300,000 to Mr. Dole's law firm, Alston & Bird, according to lobbying reports. After that, Mr. Dole worked to persuade U.S. officials his client isn't a criminal and that his business operations are transparent, said people with knowledge of the matter. In 2005, the State Department reversed itself and granted the visa. Mr. Deripaska then paid Mr. Dole and his firm an additional $260,000, filings show.

Mr. Deripaska traveled to Washington in 2005 and also made trips to the U.S. last year, said people with knowledge of the situation.

Mr. Dole and a State Department spokeswoman declined to comment.

Simon Moyse, a London-based spokesman for Mr. Deripaska, said the businessman currently possesses a multiple-entry U.S. visa. He declined to comment further or provide documentation of Mr. Deripaska's visa status.

The former Dole strategist Mr. Manafort and a former Dole fund raiser, Bruce Jackson, have received fees and donations from Ukrainian billionaire Rinat Akhmetov, the political patron of Ukrainian Prime Minister Yanukovich.

Messrs. Manafort and Jackson played prominent roles in the Ukrainian's recent visit to Washington. The visit included meetings with U.S. officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney. A company controlled by Mr. Akhmetov donated $300,000 in 2005 to a human-rights charity run by Mr. Jackson and his wife, an Internal Revenue Service document reviewed by The Wall Street Journal shows. Mr. Jackson said he was grateful for the support.

Mr. Manafort, who isn't registered as a consultant to the Ukrainian leader, didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Sessions's client, Mr. Mogilevich, is accused in a 45-count racketeering and money-laundering indictment in Philadelphia of masterminding an elaborate stock fraud using a web of shell companies in Europe. The Justice Department also is investigating whether there are any ties between Mr. Mogilevich and a recent series of billion-dollar natural-gas deals between Russian gas giant OAO Gazprom and Ukraine, people familiar with the matter said. The probe is being led by the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section.

According to people familiar with the matter, Mr. Sessions recently approached former colleagues at Justice with an unusual offer: Mr. Mogilevich would provide the U.S. with intelligence on Islamist terrorism if prosecutors opened negotiations to resolve his legal problems in the U.S. Federal prosecutors rejected that offer, lawyers and others familiar with the matter said.

Mr. Sessions's firm and a Justice Department spokesman declined to comment.

The Mogilevich talks were brokered by a prominent Washington security expert named Neil C. Livingstone, who was briefly in the news during the 1980s Iran-Contra scandal for his work on terrorism issues with White House aide Oliver North.

He declined to discuss the Mogilevich talks, other than to say they involved "very sensitive issues."

Until recently, Mr. Livingstone was chief executive of GlobalOptions, a Washington corporate-intelligence firm he founded. Mr. Sessions sits on the firm's advisory board. Most of its clients, the firm says, "operate in Russia and the Caribbean."

GlobalOptions has worked with former Soviet businessmen in the past. In 2004, Mr. Livingstone said, lobbyists at Barbour Griffith introduced GlobalOptions to a Cyprus-based firm called Highrock Holdings. Highrock is controlled by Dimytro Firtash, a Ukrainian businessman who acknowledges the company's major shareholders once included Mr. Mogilevich's wife.

In 2003-2005, Mr. Firtash brokered several billion-dollar deals between Gazprom and the government of Ukraine. They netted big profits for Highrock -- and criticism from the U.S. ambassador to the Ukraine at the time for the deals' lack of transparency.

Mr. Livingstone said Highrock hired GlobalOptions in 2004 to help it win federal safety certification for passenger jets it hoped to export to Central Asia.

However, in a recent lawsuit filed by GlobalOptions against Highrock claiming unpaid bills, the security firm alleged that Mr. Firtash hired GlobalOptions for an unspecified "special operation" on behalf of a Ukrainian government official. The two sides ceased litigating the suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, after the bill was paid, but the suit was never withdrawn.

"We have no knowledge of a company called GlobalOptions," a spokesman for Mr. Firtash said, adding that he severed his ties to Mr. Mogilevich several years ago.

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