

FROM LONG ISLAND AND MARYLAND WITH LOVE

Yet another Trump-Russia-related story dropped after regular business hours, this time in a holiday news dump zone. But after weeks of big stories dropping later in the day, we're all conditioned to hold off our cocktails.

The Washington Post article had two tidbits I found interesting (Marcy tackles the anonymous letter at the root of the story). First, Russian Ambassador Kislyak's reaction to Trump son-in-law and transition team member Jared Kushner's proposal to establish a backchannel between Trump's team and Russia.

Kislyak reportedly was taken aback by the suggestion of allowing an American to use Russian communications gear at its embassy or consulate – a proposal that would have carried security risks for Moscow as well as the Trump team.

Yeah. Not the first time Russia agents found American behavior sketchy. Recall the 2015 arrest of three Russian spies in New York? Evgeny Buryakov was really skeptical about his American contact's insistence on casino business, and with good reason. Kislyak sounds just as skeptical about Kushner's request in today's WaPo piece.

And then this bit:

Russia would also have had reasons of its own to reject such an overture from Kushner. Doing so would require Moscow to expose its most sophisticated communications capabilities – which are likely housed in highly secure locations at diplomatic compounds – to an American.

Remember Obama's last sanctions on Russia, ordered December 29? They included evicting two

diplomatic compounds – one in Long Island, another in Maryland (back to this Maryland compound in a moment). What's the chances these evictions were not only punitive but as a deterrent to their use for backchannel communications?

I've wondered for a while now about the communications methods Russian spies have used in the U.S., pondering about them in my post about 2015's three-man spy ring. What might have been left behind after the last Obama administration sanctions?

Now back to Maryland and that storied Pioneer Point estate on the water, used by putative Russian diplomats as their dacha away from the hubbub of Washington D.C. It's a lovely place, conveniently located near Annapolis, not an overly long drive from D.C., delightful waterfront for boating.

And only a hop-skip-jump across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge or a boat ride over the bay from Strategic Campaign Group (SCG) at 191 Main St #310, Annapolis – an address about a block from docks and waterfront restaurants. You may recall SCG was raided earlier this month in relation to reported conservative fundraising scams. Just so happens SCG has ties to Paul Manafort and to the Trump organization by former employee James Perry. At the time of the raid, the FBI said SCG was under investigation for fundraising related to a 2013 race.

I'm sure the proximity of SCG to the Russian's Pioneer Point dacha is just a coincidence. But squirrel away the location for future reference.

Off to have the first holiday weekend cocktail – and no, it's not a White Russian or a Moscow Mule. Have a good one!

UPDATE – 9:50 p.m. EDT –

Reuters dropped another one about a half-hour ago. Really, Jared? You can't recall three additional contacts with Russian ambassador Kislyak? You're really going to make Jamie Gorelick torch her reputation with this "dog ate

my homework" prevarication? Are you really so clueless about communications collection? Because if you are, that's as big a reason for your security clearance to be yanked as your lying has been. Somebody terminate his clearance immediately, please, whether he's a target of the investigation or not.

I need another cocktail. Race you to the bar. If only we could make Jared buy us all a round.