

WHY DID IVANKA RUN INTO JUST VESELNITSKAYA AND AKHMETSHIN AT THE TRUMP TOWER ELEVATOR?

In this post, I argued that Natalia Veselnitskaya's story about her June 9 Trump Tower meeting with Don Jr, Paul Manafort, and Jared Kushner seemed designed (with help from one time Trump and current Agalarov lawyer Scott Balber) to downplay the role of Agalarov employee Ike Kaveladze.

It's that even with all of Scott Balber's efforts, there's still no explanation for why Kaveladze attended this meeting. Given Balber's significant efforts to minimize Agalarov's role in the meeting – and his denials that Agalarov might have ties directly to Putin – I find the failure to explain that notable.

The LAT story convinces me I'm right. The basic story is that Mueller has called at least one of the attendees at that meeting back for a second interview; for a number of reasons, it is highly likely that person is Rinat Akhmetshin. The self-interested defense lawyers who are the source of the story suggest that this must be because Mueller is pursuing an obstruction case, not a collusion case.

Special counsel Robert S. Mueller III has recalled for questioning at least one participant in a controversial meeting with a Kremlin-connected Russian lawyer at Trump Tower in June 2016, and is looking into President Trump's misleading claim that the discussion

focused on adoption, rather than an offer to provide damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

Some defense lawyers involved in the case view Mueller's latest push as a sign that investigators are focusing on possible obstruction of justice by Trump and several of his closest advisors for their statements about the politically sensitive meeting, rather than for collusion with the Russians.

But the far more interesting part of the story is that Mueller wants details about Ivanka's actions that day, because, the story explains, she ran into Veselnitskaya and Akhmetshin by the Trump Tower elevator.

Investigators also are exploring the involvement of the president's daughter, Ivanka Trump, who did not attend the half-hour sit-down on June 9, 2016, but briefly spoke with two of the participants, a Russian lawyer and a Russian-born Washington lobbyist. Details of the encounter were not previously known.

From that, Twitter conspiracists and Newsweek (which lately has been close to the same thing) are suggesting that Ivanka might be in trouble.

That's not the point of this line of questioning, in my opinion.

LAT makes it clear (presumably based on Akhmetshin's story) that the Ivanka exchange happened on their way *out of the meeting* with Jr and the others.

It occurred at the Trump Tower elevator as the Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, and the lobbyist, Rinat Akhmetshin, were leaving the building and consisted of pleasantries, a person familiar with the episode said.

According to Veselnitskaya, she arrived with Akhmetshin, Kaveladze, and her translator; Jr and Manafort were in the board room when she arrived.

I came to the meeting with Anatoly Samochornov, a translator, Irakly Kaveladze, a lawyer of my client who helped to arrange for the meeting, Rinat Akhmetshin, my colleague who was working with me on the Prevezon case. We were met by a big, stout man who introduced himself as Rob and escorted us on the elevator to the boardroom. I saw two men in the boardroom – one of them introduced himself as Donald Trump Jr., while the other did not introduce himself.

She says she met with Kaveladze before the meeting.

I met him personally first on June 9 shortly before the meeting.

We had a phone call and met at a café, I do not remember where and at what café.

Though, admittedly, every single thing she says about Kaveladze is sketchy.

Finally, Veselnitskaya denies that she met with Glenn Simpson before and after the meeting, a story Fox News reported that “a confidential source” told it.

Last week Fox News 38 referring to a confidential source reported that I met with Glenn Simpson before and after the meeting with Trump’s son, and that “but hours before the Trump Tower meeting on June 9, 2016, Fusion co-founder and ex-Wall Street Journal reporter Glenn Simpson was with Veselnitskaya in a Manhattan federal courtroom, in a hearing on the DOJ’s claim against Prevezon Holdings, a Cyprus company

owned by a Russian businessman Denis Katsyv.” This statement does not reflect the reality.

Nowhere in Veselnitskaya’s story addresses how or in whose company she left the meeting.

But the LAT report suggests she left with Akhmetshin. The report mentions nothing about the presence of Goldstone or Kaveladze, waiting at the elevator, chatting up Ivanka.

So did the two Agalarov employees stay later, which would leave them in a room alone with Don Jr and Paul Manafort?

Update: I’ve corrected this to reflect that Veselnitskaya said she did arrive with Kaveladze.