

THE MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE SIMPSON- VESELNITSKAYA MEETINGS

Whew. I've finally finished doing an initial pass on the transcript of Glenn Simpson's interview with the Senate Judiciary Committee. I did three threads on Twitter on it:

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I guess I'll have a series of posts on what's in the dossier, hopefully with a ton more nuance than coming from those who claim it totally justifies the dossier project. It doesn't.

But before I get into questions that Simpson's testimony should raise about the dossier, I want to focus on a narrow issue arising out of one the prior leaks of Simpson's testimony. Back in November, Fox News reported that Simpson had met with Natalia Veselnitskaya at a court hearing before and "after" the Trump Tower meeting; the report appeared based on the

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, a confidential source told Fox News. Court records reviewed by Fox News, email correspondence and published reports corroborate the pair's presence together. The source told Fox News they also were together after the Trump Tower meeting.

Simpson's presence with Veselnitskaya

during this critical week in June – together with revelations about Fusion’s simultaneous financial ties to the DNC, Clinton campaign and Russian interests – raise new questions about the company’s role in the 2016 election.

Veselnitskaya rejected the report in her answers to SJC.

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.

Given the questions I raised about whether Veselnitskaya left the June 9 meeting with Ike Kaveladze – with whom she had arrived – I found the question of what Veselnitskaya had done before and after of interest.

Here’s what the transcript actually shows about those meetings.

Q. Were any [meetings with Veselnitskaya] in June 2016?

A. Yes. Two.

Q. Were those in New York or in D.C.?

A. I believe that one was in New York and one was in D.C.

Q. Do you recall the specific date of either?

A. I didn’t until we tried to piece

these things together, but June 8th I think was the dinner in New York and I think the 10th was the dinner in D.C., something like that.

Q. And what were the purposes of these dinners?

A. Well, the first one was just an obligatory client dinner which, you know, when you work on a legal case you get invited to dinner with the clients. The one in D.C. was more of a social thing. It wasn't – she was at it, but it wasn't really about the case. It was just a bunch of Mark Cymrot's friends. You know, the editor of the Washington Post book section was there and his wife who's a well-known author were also there.

Q. You mentioned you had dinner with Ms. Veselnitskaya on June 8th and 10th of 2016. Were you generally aware of her trip to the United States in June?

[snip]

Simpson: I can tell you what I knew. I knew she was coming in I guess on the 8th. I don't have a clear recollection of the dinner, but I know – I believe we had a dinner. The problem is I had more than one. So I don't have a clear recollection of it. Anyway, I saw her the next day in court at this hearing and I'm sure we exchanged greetings, but, as I say, she speaks Russian and I speak English. I think she was with Anatoli and she left afterwards. I know she didn't tell me any other plans she had.

Q. So you had dinner the 8th, saw her in court on the 9th; is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. And dinner again on the 10th?

A. In D.C.

[snip]

Q. It has widely been reported Ms. Veselnitskaya and Mr. Akhmetshin and others met with Donald Trump, Junior, Paul Manafort, and Jared Kushner on June 9th, 2016. Were you aware of this meeting beforehand?

A. No.

Q. It didn't come up at the dinner the night before?

A. No.

Q. When did you first become aware of the meeting?

A. Around the time it broke in the New York Times. I was stunned.

Q. Is it correct that that means it wasn't discussed at the dinner on the 10th?

A. No, but, again, you know, the dinner on the 10th was I was at one end of the table talking to a woman about her biography on Simon Bolivar and she was at the other end with Rinat and she doesn't really speak much English.

Basically, while it supports that Simpson saw Veselnitskaya at the court hearing (meaning Veselnitskaya is wrong on that point), it doesn't support that she came from or returned to a meeting with Simpson directly before and after the Trump Tower meeting. Instead, it seems to support the case that Veselnitskaya and Simpson saw each other three days in succession because the Prevezon hearing was the stated purpose of her visit to the US. And Simpson's claim that linguistic barriers prevented them from chatting that much seems credible.

Which raises questions about why the claim that Veselnitskaya had met with Simpson got leaked to

Fox.

Most likely, it was leaked as part of GOP efforts to suggest that Fusion is suspect and the dossier as a whole might be Russian disinformation. But given my new questions about when and with whom Veselnitskaya left the meeting, I wonder whether the discussion of a meeting afterwards wasn't meant to distract from details about Kaveladze's departure.

In any case, these three reports all conflict. My guess is Simpson's is most accurate (because this is probably what the Fox report is based off, because he's fluent in English, and because his report has so much more detail, not at all because I find his testimony above question).