

MANAFORT RENEWED HIS OUTREACH TO FBC GROUP AFTER MUELLER'S EARLY APRIL REVELATIONS

As I noted, last night Mueller's team moved to revoke Paul Manafort's bail because – they allege – he has been attempting to suborn perjury from witnesses associated with the FBC Group PR firm. In addition to a declaration laying out the evidence for that claim, Mueller's team included a list of contacts between Manafort himself and Konstantin Kilimnik with people at FBC Group. Amy Berman Jackson has scheduled a hearing for June 15 to consider the motion.

As the declaration lays out, person D1 (likely Alan Friedman) hadn't spoken to Manafort since last July, probably before his public raid by the FBI and around the time Friedman started cooperating with the government. He hung up when Manafort called him in February and regarded the outreach as an effort to suborn perjury.

Person D1 told the government that in or around this period, Manafort called Person D1, and that the two had not spoken since July of the previous year. Person D1 stated that after answering the call and after the caller identified himself as Manafort, Manafort stated that he wanted to give Person D1 a heads-up about Hapsburg. Person D1 immediately ended the call because he was concerned about the outreach.

[snip]

Person D1 told the government that Person D1 understood Manafort's messages to be an effort to "suborn perjury" by influencing Person D1's potential

statements. Person D1 well knew and believed from frequent interactions with its members that the Hapsburg group in fact lobbied in the United States, and that Manafort and Person A knew that fact.

Most of the declaration focuses on a set of communications immediately in the wake of Rick Gates' plea deal, which made it clear Mueller had expanded Manafort's prosecution to include actions of the Hapsburg Group – a bunch of European bigwigs Manafort hired to lie about Ukraine publicly and to Congress. I noted the day of Manafort's first call that Friedman was surely cooperating with Mueller, but apparently I'm smarter than Manafort.

What I'm interested in, however, is that on April 4, Kilimnik tried again, with WhatsApp and Telegram outreach to both D1 and the PR person on the project.

4/4/2018: 13:00 (UTC)	Person A	Person D1	WhatsApp	Chat	Hi. This is [Person A's first initial]. My friend P is looking for ways to connect to you to pass you several messages. Can we arrange that.	Person D1 Production
4/4/2018: 08:53 (CEST)	Person A	Person D2	WhatsApp	Chat	Hey. This is [Person A]. My friend P asked me again to help connect him with [Person D1]. Can you help?	Person D2 Production
4/4/2018: 08:54 (CEST)	Person A	Person D2	Telegram	Chat	Hey. My friend P has asked me again if there is any way to help connect him through [Person D1]	Person D2 Production
4/4/2018: 08:54 (CEST)	Person A	Person D2	Telegram	Chat	I tried him on all numbers.	Person D2 Production

Unlike the Hapsburg specific outreach, the declaration offers no explanation for Kilimnik's April outreach.

Approximately one month later, Person A reached out to Person D1 directly as well. On April 4, 2018, Person A sent a message to Person D1: "Hi. This is [Person A's first initial]. My friend P is looking for ways to connect to you to pass you several messages. Can we arrange that." Person A reached out to Person D2 the same day, and reiterated his need for help in connecting Person D1 with Manafort. Person A added in his text to Person D2: "I tried him [i.e., Person D1] on all numbers."

This outreach is non-specific. Kilimnik just appears to have an urgent need to reach out to (presumably) Friedman, in Manafort's name, on April 4.

The timing is particularly interesting to me. The outreach happens in the wake of the Alex Van Der Zwaan sentencing filings, which provided more detail on Skadden Arp's involvement in the Yulia Tymoshenko whitewash, and as such may have concerned the Hapsburg players. In addition, the prosecution filing for the first time made (and repeated Rick Gates' indirect) allegations that Kilimnik himself was and might still be a Russian intelligence officer.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agents assisting the Special Counsel's Office assess that Person A has ties to a Russian intelligence service and had such ties in 2016. During his first interview with the Special Counsel's Office, van der Zwaan admitted that he knew of that connection, stating that Gates told him Person A was a former Russian Intelligence Officer with the GRU.

The outreach also happened in the wake of Mueller's filing of the Rosenstein Memo, as well as public claims that included Oleg Deripaska in the scope of the investigation.

So it's likely that Paul Manafort and Konstantin Kilimnik regarded those early April filings as impacting in some way on FBC Group, and possibly on Alan Friedman personally.

Of course, Friedman wasn't playing Manafort's games by that point, and hadn't been already for over a month (and probably over 8 or 9 months).

Whatever else Manafort learned with yesterday's filings, he likely also confirmed that. Whatever added risk those early April filings posed to Manafort, FBC Group is probably part of the risk, not part of his efforts to dodge the risk.

Update: I made an error in this post originally, by saying that it pertains to Mercury (Company A or B in Mueller's findings). Josh Gerstein correctly IDs the company as FBC Media, which would make D1 Alan Friedman.