

THE SMOKING CRATERS WHERE TRUMP DEAL BROKERS USED TO BE

Amid the news that DOJ is giving the Gang of Eight another chance to look at sensitive case files on the Russia investigation (some of which they failed to look at in the last briefing), two scoops yesterday should provide far more damning proof of where the “SpyGate” is.

One-time Trump broker Sergei Millian offered Papadopoulos \$30,000 a month to partner while working for Trump

First, in a piece that finally recognizes the existence of Ivan Timofeev (yet still hides how George Papadopoulos successfully hid his communications with him through two FBI interviews), Chuck Ross confirms what I had guessed: that Sergei Millian is the contact described in the FBI affidavit about whom Papadopoulos asks for feedback from Timofeev.

Mangiante, an Italian national, confirmed to TheDCNF that Millian is the individual Papadopoulos described in a July 22, 2016 Facebook message that is cited in documents the special counsel’s office released in October.

“On or about July 22, 2016, PAPADOPOULOS messages Foreign Contact 2 on Facebook to ask whether Foreign Contact 2 knew a particular individual with extensive ties to Russian-based businesses and persons,” reads an affidavit released along with Papadopoulos’ guilty plea. “PAPADOPOULOS asked Foreign Contact 2 ‘[i]f you know any background of him

that is noteworthy before I see him, kindly send my way.’”

Papadopoulos and Millian met days after the July 22, 2016 Facebook message, said Mangiante, who has recently denied that Papadopoulos was engaged in collusion with Russians.

Mangiante also said that Papadopoulos and Millian met multiple times in Chicago and New York City before the election. In one encounter in Chicago, Millian offered Papadopoulos a substantial sum of money as part of an energy-related business deal.

The catch was that Millian said Papadopoulos would have to remain in the Trump administration while carrying out the work.

The business offer has been previously reported by *The New York Times* and *NBC News*. However, Mangiante is providing new details, saying that Millian offered Papadopoulos “\$30,000 a month to work as a consultant while with Trump.”

“He refused, of course,” Mangiante said of Papadopoulos.

Interjection: This confirmation should end all the speculation from people examining Mangiante’s apparent flip flop in her public statements about Papadopoulos and seeing a Slavic accent to her statements. Mangiante’s actions are best understood, I think, by understanding that she knows little about US law and how she might best help her spouse, which has led her to respond to the cues of a bunch of sleazy people who have used her unfamiliarity to feed their own narratives or help their own clients (I’m thinking specifically of Victoria Toensing’s client Sam Clovis). But if Mangiante were a Russian spy, there’d be little reason for her to provide evidence that Millian is a Russian operative who sought to handle

Papadopoulos and through him Trump's foreign policy.

That said, Mangiante's claims about her spouse are unsurprisingly misleading. For example, she has Chuck Ross ignoring the most damning parts of Papadopoulos' lies to the FBI, as well as his deletion of his Facebook account to hide (among other things) precisely the exchange where Papadopoulos asked Timofeev about Millian. Unsurprisingly, she doesn't mention that Papadopoulos couldn't take Millian up on his lucrative deal, because Mike Flynn didn't last in the National Security Advisor job long enough for him to offer Papadopoulos the job that would have been the prerequisite to accept the offer.

Mr. Millian proposed that he and Mr. Papadopoulos form an energy-related business that would be financed by Russian billionaires "who are not under sanctions" and would "open all doors for us" at "any level all the way to the top."

One billionaire, he said, wanted to explore the idea of opening a Trump-branded hotel in Moscow. "I know the president will distance himself from business, but his children might be interested," he wrote.

Nothing came of his proposals, partly because Mr. Papadopoulos was hoping that Michael T. Flynn, then Mr. Trump's pick to be national security adviser, might give him the energy portfolio at the National Security Council.

The pair exchanged New Year's greetings in the final hours of 2016. "Happy New Year, sir," Mr. Papadopoulos wrote.

"Thank you and same to you, George. Happy New Year!" Mr. Flynn responded, ahead of a year that seemed to hold great promise.

But 2017 did not unfold that way. Within

months, Mr. Flynn was fired, and both men were charged with lying to the F.B.I. And both became important witnesses in the investigation Mr. Papadopoulos had played a critical role in starting.

This is all the more interesting because (as Glenn Simpson explained to Adam Schiff) Millian has served a function for Trump that – like this Trump Tower deal – provided Trump a way to get loans for his business projects, in this case for Project Hollywood.

MR. SCHIFF: And tell me about the Trump Hollywood project. That was an example of the latter or the former? Did they get the financing from what you could tell because they got a bunch of Russians to pre-sale, or did they go to a bank and say these are our investors, or how did they go about that?

MR. SIMPSON: Well, eventually, I mean, they lost the project. It went under. I, can't – I'm not – I'm sure we did look at who the creditors were, who the lenders were. This is the project that Sergi Millian appears to have been involved in, and there's a picture of Jorge Perez, Donald Trump, and Sergi Millian.

And he tells a story about meeting Donald Trump at the golf – at a racetrack, drinking a bottle of Crystal with him, seems – he gave him some Crystal. And that was in the early phases of the project. So it was clear that Donald Trump – so the equity partner was the related group. It was clear that this Russian had been brought into this with Trump, and what you can surmise from that is that he's there to say there are buyers. We can bring you buyers for this property. And that's what a developer needs to know is that

he's got buyer interest.

MR. SCHIFF: And how does it work? Let's say Sergi Millian or someone else lines up the Russian buyers. The Russian buyers sign pre-sale agreements. Trump can then get financing for the rest of the project. Do the buyers go through and buy the properties, or is that no longer necessary, once you've obtained the bank financing you can actually sell them to real people?

An architecture firm disappears overnight upon learning Mueller is watching

Keep that model – doing the real estate things that help Trump get loans – in mind when you read this, which I genuinely find to be among the most amazing Russian related stories since the election. In April, acting on a tip, CNBC asked an architect who has worked with Trump on some Eurasian and two American projects, John Fotiadis, about that relationship. Within days, his firm folded.

Between 2007 and 2013, Fotiadis designed all or part of six Trump-branded developments: a Trump Tower in Kazakhstan; a Trump-branded seaside resort in the republic of Georgia; a 47-story Trump Tower in Tbilisi, Georgia; hotel rooms at the Trump Tower in Istanbul; a Trump movie studio complex in Florida; and major portions of the Trump Parc Stamford, a condominium tower in Connecticut.

[snip]

The McClatchy news service reported in April that Mueller's probe was looking more closely at the people involved in

Trump's dealings in three countries, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Around this time, CNBC received a tip that Fotiadis had worked on several Trump projects in Eurasia. Curious about his professional relationship with Trump, CNBC reached out to Fotiadis on April 11 for comment about this work.

Fotiadis did not respond to a call or an email. But eight hours later, he announced on Twitter that he was closing his firm, John Fotiadis Architect, or JFA, after 10 years in business. A few days later, Fotiadis closed the Twitter account he had used to announce he was closing down his firm.

By the end of the week, all the content from Fotiadis' professional website, including his portfolio, had been removed, leaving only a notesaying he planned to join a New Jersey-based engineering company.

Gone was Fotiadis' impressive portfolio of 30 projects (some of which are pictured below), including villas, schools and office buildings he has designed for clients around the world. Also gone was any reference to the two overseas branches of JFA that he had opened – in Tbilisi and Kiev, Ukraine.

Admittedly, there's no evidence to explain what happened here. But it sure has the look of either an intelligence front folding, or someone trying to get out of some really uncomfortable relationships quickly (CNBC describes Fotiadis' new job with a company that does "car dealerships, self-storage facilities and medical labs," which would seem to support the latter conclusion).

That said, as CNBC notes, the complex projects of the sort that Trump often use the architect as one key ingredient to bring in big creditors.

“The architect is a key part of the Trump sales pitch when he goes into these countries, and he’s convincing the money guys to give him a branding and development deal,” said Jan deRoos, a Cornell University professor of real estate finance. “The architect is the one who translates the Trump brand into actual design and construction standards.”

Update, July 2020: Fotiadis contacted me to explain that he took down his firm’s site at the request of a new employer.

In June of 2018, she published two articles on me on CNBC’s website and tweeted away – touting her “scoop” for all the world to see and marvel at. You see, around the same time she had tried to contact me (in mid-April of 2018), I took down my Architecture firm’s (JFA’s) social media and website when I was asked to do so by my new employers, with whom I had just come to an agreement for employment. The timing of those two completely separate and unrelated events, may have been unfortunate, but far worse, was exploited by Wilkie in a rather pathetic attempt at self-aggrandizement, so as to create a news story where there was none.

In her tweets Wilkie claimed I “disappeared” and went “MIA” simply because I chose not to respond to her and took my company’s social media down around the same time. In other words Wilkie was trying to falsely claim that somehow her inquiry had forced me to “disappear” or at least “lower my profile”.

He also says he was never contacted by any investigators.

The Agalrov perennial Trump dangle

And these two stories come on top of the Agalarov's perennial Trump dangle, including for a Trump Tower Moscow. I'm still working on the SJC released files (which are really damning), but the family complained that their years of cultivating Trump crumbled after the June 9 Magnitsky dangle was exposed.

These people – or the people who in turn managed them – exerted and probably still exert tremendous influence over Trump. They all seem to lay out a network of compromise far deeper than we imagined when this all started.