

PAUL MANAFORT KNEW OF HIS INCLUSION IN THE BLACK LEDGER TWO MONTHS BEFORE NYT STORY

In spite of Fiona Hill's warnings not to peddle in Russian backed disinformation, the seemingly single frothy right talking point today is to embrace the claim that Ukraine, like Russia, tried to tamper in the 2016 election.

None of them have noted the fact that Paul Manafort confessed that he discussed carving up Ukraine and how to win Michigan in a meeting where he talked about how to get back on the gravy train of Ukrainian oligarchs Serhiy Lyovochkin and Rinat Akhmetov (as well as Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska).

Instead, they've tried to pitch Ukrainians standing up for the territorial integrity of Ukraine as anti-Trump, in contradiction to Trump's sworn answers to Robert Mueller. They've also accused Republican-paid experts doing open source research on Russian and Ukrainian corruption of being Democratic operatives. In particular, they've misrepresented sworn testimony to launch a claim that Sergii Leshchenko was a source for the Steele dossier and/or he said something mean about Paul Manafort, the aforementioned confessed recipient of Ukrainian influence peddling during the 2016 election.

The other day, Leshchenko debunked such claims, in part by noting that the version of the Black Ledger he released had had the Manafort related entries stripped from it.

I published the first portion of the "black ledger" on May 31, 2016. I published 22 pages from the secret manuscript of the Party of Regions,

which was sent anonymously to my official email address at the parliament's domain. The document listed under-the-table cash payments to Ukrainian politicians, lawmakers, judges and members of the Central Election Commission. However, Manafort was not mentioned there. His name was not in the 22 pages I obtained.

I did not have any other pages except for these ones, although I now know it was an excerpt from more than 800 pages that the black ledger contained. Believe me, had Manafort's name been in the pages I obtained, I would have published it, because I think Manafort helped establish one of the most outrageously corrupt regimes in the world, headed by Yanukovich.

I learned that Manafort was featured in the full version of the black ledger only on Aug. 14, 2016 when the New York Times reported it. The day before, I was contacted by a Times' journalist and asked if I knew anything about Manafort in Yanukovich's records. I said I didn't, and it was true. If I had that information, I would have been the first to publish it.

Four days after the New York Times article, on Aug. 18, 2016, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, or NABU, officially confirmed that Manafort's name appeared in the black ledger. According to it, he received cash payments of more than \$12.7 million.

That raises the significance of something else Leshchenko notes (but which has largely escaped notice of the press here).

In a February 14, 2018 interview, member of the far right in good standing Steve Bannon told

Robert Mueller that Manafort knew the story of his inclusion in the Black Ledger was coming two months before it came out in the NYT. (PDF 112-113)

Bannon told Trump he would take the position as Campaign Chief Executive.

At the time Trump was 16 points down, the campaign had no organization, no money, 75 % of the population thought the country was in decline, they were working with the "deplorables," and Bannon had a 100% certitude that they would win . Bannon believed the big task was to give people permission to vote for Trump as commander in chief.

The next day Bannon met with Manafort, which was the same time that the news about the "Black Ledger" was breaking. Bannon was at campaign headquarters when Manafort told Bannon to come up to Trump Tower. When Bannon arrived, Manafort showed him something about a NY Times story about the "Black Ledger" and \$15 million dollars from the Ukraine. Bannon asked when t his story was coming out. Manafort replied that he had known about the story coming out for approximately 2 months and had not gotten involved in it. Bannon subsequently told Trump to keep Manafort, to not fire him, and to keep him around for a couple of weeks. Bannon called Kushner, and asked him to get back in order to do something publicity wise to counteract the negative press surrounding the story. Trump had asked Bannon at one time about "what was this thing with Manafort out of the Ukraine," and they talked for approximately 15 minutes on it . Trump was never linked with other Russian news stories at the time, and he believed Manafort was a promoter . Trump was more worried about how they story made them look . Bannon believed that Trump talked

with Manafort about the story.

There are several implications about this story, starting with the fact that Bannon didn't think the story required Manafort to resign. Importantly, this means Manafort recognized that he would be implicated by the Black Ledger even though his name was not published in what Leshchenko released.

Significantly: If there was an impact by the story breaking in August 2016 – if it did damage to the Trump campaign – Trump has one person to blame for that. Paul Manafort, both because of his real corruption, but also because he didn't warn the candidate.

Not Sergii Leshchenko. But Paul Manafort.

The same guy who Russian-backed Ukrainians had targeted for influence just 12 days before the story broke.