

# THREE THINGS: TURF'S UP

*[NB: check the byline, thanks. Some of this content may be speculative. /~Rayne]*

Last week Thursday, LIV Golf was mentioned in The New York Time's article, Justice Dept. Intensifying Efforts to Determine if Trump Hid Documents. It's the new professional golf tour funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund.

We've had a little fun with the new LIV Golf tour and the game of golf in comments. We should spend a little more time on this subject if Special Counsel Jack Smith thought Trump's LIV-related business was subpoena worthy. Three Trump golf courses – Trump National-Bedminster NJ, Trump National-Sterling VA, Trump National-Doral FL – will host three of LIV Golf tour's 14 events this season. Trump's Bedminster and Doral courses hosted LIV during its inaugural season.

For those who are unfamiliar with the history of LIV Golf, here's a timeline of its history along with some key points in U.S.-Saudi and Saudi-tangential events.

**1994** – Aussie pro golfer Greg Norman tried to establish an alternative tour competing with the PGA with financial assist from Rupert Murdoch.

The idea of a breakaway circuit from the PGA Tour is far from a novel idea; the PGA Tour itself came to pass after players split from the PGA of America in 1967 to form the Tournament Players Division. More recently, former World No. 1 Greg Norman and media tycoon Rupert Murdoch attempted to create a "World Golf Tour" in the mid-1990s featuring the top players competing in an eight-event series.

A television contract with Murdoch's Fox Sports was even secured. But the endeavor was squashed as then-PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem flexed both the tour's legal chops and standing in the game. Other iterations of a world tour have come and gone without much fanfare.

**November 2016** – U.S. general election won by Donald Trump, Republicans take Congress.

**February 3, 2017** – Using the Congressional Review Act to fast track their effort, Senate passes a joint resolution already approved by the house, disproving the Securities and Exchange Commission's Rule 13q-1, which implemented Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

Section 1504 and SEC rule 13q-1 enacted the U.S.' participation in the EITI's anti-corruption effort.

**February 13, 2017** – Trump signed the disproving resolution. (Probably just another coincidence that Michael Flynn resigned this day as National Security Adviser.)

**September 2017** – Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi became a columnist for the Washington Post.

**October 25, 2017** – Jared Kushner departed for an unpublicized meeting with government officials in Saudi Arabia.

**October 25, 2017** – Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Sigal Mandelker traveled separately from Kushner to participate in bilateral discussions, which included the memorandum of understanding with the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC). The U.S. and Saudi

Arabia chair the TFTC while Gulf States form its membership.

**October 30, 2017** – Jared Kushner met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, discussing strategy until 4:00 am. News reports didn't indicate when exactly Kushner arrived or when discussions began. (Paul Manafort, Rick Gates, George Papadopolous were indicted this day, but not Kushner; good thing "excellent guy" Papadopolous as a former Trump campaign "energy and oil consultant" wasn't involved in Kushner's work with Saudi Arabia, that we knew of at that time.)

**November 4, 2017** – At 7:49 am EDT, Trump tweeted,

"Would very much appreciate Saudi Arabia doing their IPO of Aramco with the New York Stock Exchange. Important to the United States!"

**November 4, 2017** – (approximately 5:00 pm EDT, midnight Riyadh local time) At least 10 Saudi princes and dozens of government ministers were arrested and detained under what has been reported as an anti-corruption initiative. Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, a critic of Trump and a tech industry investor of note, was among those arrested this weekend.

**November 4, 2017** – At 11:12 pm EDT Reuters reported Trump said he had spoken with King Salman bin Abdulaziz about listing Saudi Aramco on the NYSE. The IPO is expected to be the largest offering ever.

**October 2, 2018** – Jamal Khashoggi assassinated by dismemberment at the order of KSA's crown prince Mohammad bin Salman.

**November 6, 2018** – U.S. mid-term elections swings control of Congress with blue wave.

**2019** – Greg Norman pursued again the

development and launch of a PGA alternative including the Premier Golf League.

**August 29, 2019** – Trump tweeted a classified satellite image of the failed Safir rocket launch in Iran.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence referred questions about the image to the White House, which declined to comment.

“We had a photo and I released it, which I have the absolute right to do,” the president told reporters late Friday.

**January 3, 2020** – Trump authorized assassination of Iran’s major general Qasem Soleimani by a U.S. drone strike near the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq.

**November 2020** – U.S. general election won by Biden, Democrats take Congress.

**January 20, 2021** – Trump departs White House as his term ends.

**October 29, 2021** – Greg Norman named CEO of LIV – a subset of KSA’s Public Investment Fund – which said it would make \$200 million investment in an Asian tour with tourneys across Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

**May 2022:** *Amos Hochstein and Brett McGurk believe they make a deal for a two-part increase of production*

**June 2, 2022:** *OPEC announces the first part of production increases and Biden announces his Saudi trip*

**June 3, 2022:** *Trump travels from Mar-a-Lago to Bedminster for Saudi golf tournament*

**June 7, 2022:** *Adam Schiff and others send Biden a letter warning about Saudi Arabia*

*Prior to July 15, 2022: Briefings for Intelligence Committees on secret plan*

*July 15, 2022: Biden meets with Mohammed bin Salman*

*August 3, 2022: Saudis announce half of production increase promised ("the first public warning")*

*September 5, 2022: OPEC announced production cuts*

*Late September 2022: US officials begin hearing of deep production cuts on October 5*

*September 24, 2022: MbS says there will be no production cuts*

*September 27, 2022: Abdulaziz argues cuts would impede diversification plans*

*September 28, 2022: Saudis inform the US they will announce production cuts*

*October 26 2022: Jared Kushner speaks at Saudi investment summit*

Note the items in italics – they're from Marcy's timeline in her post *The Intelligence Gaps Where the Saudis Hid Their October Surprise* which she published last October.

Diversification of cash earned from oil into non-fossil fuel investments is what the PIF does; LIV Golf is one of the many diverse investments, and Trump along with the Trump organization is a beneficiary of that investment – and possibly an investment as well.

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The LIV Golf league is in competition with the U.S.-based Pro Golfers Association Tour (PGA) for talent as well as media coverage even though it is not as focused on U.S. courses as the PGA. Golfers are required by the PGA to choose between tours – they must commit to the PGA or the other. They can't play for both since doing so would create conflicts in timing and in

contracts with TV/cable networks carrying golf events.

(Much of this conflict sounds very familiar to those who remember Trump's first foray into sports with the USFL. His demand that USFL play in the fall and not the spring, putting the new league in direct conflict with the NFL, ultimately caused the demise of the USFL. Trump tried multiple times to get into the sports industry between the USFL and LIV Golf.)

Greg Norman has been open for the last three decades about his motivation for creating a new league and tour. While he claims he wants to promote golf, he's simply in it for the money.

Golf has been and remains a sport for the wealthy. Equipment is expensive, membership at a course is expensive, the amount of time required to practice and become proficient to make the sport enjoyable requires considerable freedom from financial encumbrances. If Norman was really trying to promote the sport, he'd find ways to make it more accessible, but no. He just wants players including himself to make more money.

This makes Norman the perfect tool for sportswashing – he has no moral qualms about focusing on more money for golf, without regard for the reasons why sponsors are so ready with cash.

Never mind the little problem of a Saudi journalist working for an American news outlet being sawn into pieces because they expressed dissent. As Norman sees it, "We've all made mistakes."

His callousness is breathtaking, openly taking blood money and blowing off a gruesome murder because golf. The tour will just blow by the inconvenience of working for a murderer, wash away the taint with enough bankable green and enough manicured greens.

If the CEO of LIV Golf is this indifferent to the kind of people from which he takes money,

one has to wonder just how deeply this insensitivity goes into the tour's operations.

No wonder, then, Trump and his courses are engaged with LIV – they're equally tactless and hard-hearted fit.

No wonder these business connections have been subpoenaed.

It would be nice to know if Trump's creepy Victorian doll of a son-in-law Kushner negotiated the postmortem tacit approval of Khashoggi's assassination and the delivery of Soleimani's death in exchange for future support to both Kushner in the form of a massive \$2 billion payout and Trump's participation in LIV Golf as a key ~~money and image laundering vehicle~~ golf course host for the tour.

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One of our long-time community members, William Ockham, went through last Thursday's NYT article looking for sourcing. The article was focused on the Department of Justice's subpoena of surveillance videotape at Mar-a-Lago in relation to classified documents in Trump's possession after he left office. It looked like Trump's attorney Evan Corcoran (or Corcoran's attorney(s)) was the possible sole source for the NYT's multi-contributor piece.

What seemed odd was the mention of LIV Golf toward the middle of the article, in these two grafs – the 11th and 12th of 30 total paragraphs:

One of the previously unreported subpoenas to the Trump Organization sought records pertaining to Mr. Trump's dealings with a Saudi-backed professional golf venture known as LIV Golf, which is holding tournaments at some of Mr. Trump's golf resorts.

It is unclear what bearing Mr. Trump's relationship with LIV Golf has on the broader investigation, but it suggests

that the prosecutors are examining certain elements of Mr. Trump's family business.

These two grafts are immaculately conceived and virgin birthed. There's no source mentioned.

Yet the NYT felt its readers would want to know *now* that the Special Counsel was looking into Trump's LIV Golf business.

Or was it not that the public needed to know, but that the source felt others needed to know who had not known about this subpoena just as the public hadn't known?

What are the chances this subpoena has been quiet not only for diplomatic reasons, but for counterintelligence reasons?

What are the chances other Trump courses have also been subpoenaed by the Special Counsel – those which have not been involved so far in LIV Golf?

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NYT included a link to a graphic-centric report published in mid-December – Inside Mar-a-Lago, Where Thousands Partied Near Secret Files.

I admit to missing this piece at the time; it was published just as the news media enters its annual doldrums. Because the public is generally busy wrapping up both the end of the year and wrapping holiday presents, news readership falls off. Evergreen stuff is published, like ever popular year-end listicles – quick and easy to produce, keeps for a while, pure fluffy filler.

A graphic piece without a corresponding news peg fits this time period well and might have been a way to clean the NYT's desk of a piece it couldn't offer earlier. The interactive graphic report on Mar-a-Lago and the location of the presidential records and classified documents in the 20-acre facility ended up buried at the front end of the holiday dump zone.



But like other evergreen work, this piece kept well and suited the NYT's article as an interstitial adder.

What puzzles me, though, is what the NYT's team working on this piece – including Maggie Haberman – didn't notice or didn't point out there had been recent and obvious grounds work on the compound.

Note the yellow highlight I've added to this graphic:



As reported, there are two doors off the pool area which allow access to the hallway leading to the storage beneath Mar-a-Lago's main floor – they're highlighted in yellow.

I've also highlighted Trump's personal office in the building to the right. It's been noted there are stairs to the office which have not had a barrier to prevent access, except on rare occasions when a cordon has been strung across the first steps.

I suspect there's an elevator in the building somewhere which hasn't been mentioned because Trump's physical condition (and possibly his neurological condition) makes it unlikely he climbs up nearly three flights of stairs on the regular.

Lastly, I've highlighted in the upper right the entrance to an underground tunnel. I know we've discussed it here before that there was at least one tunnel beneath Mar-a-Lago's grounds, but unfortunately it was in comments and not in the body of a post. The tunnel I highlighted travels under the public roadway to the Mar-a-Lago beachhouse property on the other side of S.

Ocean Boulevard. Anyone coming off the beach at the beachhouse can access this tunnel based on photos available across the internet.

Here are examples of photos on the internet showing the Mar-a-Lago property on both sides of the roadway.

This one is a Google Maps snapshot taken by Google as it scanned the road in February 2021 (gee, I wonder why the flag was at half mast).



On the left hidden behind greens and a low stucco wall is a stairwell to the tunnel beneath the roadway. On the right behind the greens is the tunnel's other entrance leading to a walkway which traverses the lawn diagonally toward the buildings.

Here is a screen capture from an overhead video taken by drone, dated August 2022; I've circled the approximate entrances to the tunnels in orange. No idea the exact date this was taken, whether before or after the FBI served a warrant on Mar-a-Lago.



And here is another Google Maps snapshot taken by Google as it scanned the road in October

2022, before the NYT article but after the FBI served the warrant.



Note the wall at the corner over the tunnel, hiding the entrance from the road and any pedestrians on foot. The NYT's interactive graphics piece shows this wall but makes no observation that work has been done at this corner.

Go a little further around the bend and you'll not only see the grounds work in progress but at least one rental container within car lengths of the tunnel's location.



Trump has owned Mar-a-Lago since 1985 and lived there on site when in Florida.

After all this time – at least eight years by the Google Street View photos available online – why was this amount of grounds work along this wall near the tunnel needed last year?

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Like Trump's disgusting habit of cheating at golf and like he cheats on his wives, his relationship with LIV Golf is all kinds of awkward and revolting.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has had to play nicely with KSA this past month because of KSA's role in helping get Americans out of Sudan.

They had to make all kinds of nice noises about this in spite of KSA fucking over Biden about oil production.

I can't rule out there are even more awkward bits out there, like KSA's new friendliness with Iran which may have been shaped by Trump's assassination of General Soleimani, or China's overtures with KSA and Iran which are likely efforts to smooth the way for China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Nor have I forgotten the possibility that Trump's war crime committed to obtain Syrian oil may begun with help and for the benefit of KSA. It crossed my mind when there were recent attacks in Syria on Americans that this matter may still be in play in spite of Biden administration's change in sanctions for development of that Syrian oil – especially since the drone attack in al-Hasakah which killed an American contractor just happened to be in Block 26 in eastern Syria where Trump permitted oil development for his war crime.

We shouldn't expect to hear much about the subpoena of LIV Golf business. There's more likely to be news about specific Trump courses like Bedminster – the parent corporation already having been convicted of fraud.

But we can watch for geopolitical disturbances in tandem with the dates Trump courses host LIV Golf events.

Fri, May 26 – Sun, May 28  
Trump National Golf Club Washington DC,  
Sterling, VA

Fri, Aug 11 – Sun, Aug 13  
Trump National Golf Club Bedminster, Bedminster,  
NJ

Fri, Oct 20 – Sun, Oct 22

Trump National Doral Miami, Miami, FL