

IN LEV PARNAS INVESTIGATION, SDNY DECIDED THAT IVANA TRUMP IS NOT POLITICAL

I really should be writing a responsible article describing, in detail, the three phases of the Lev Parnas investigation. But instead, I need to obsess about Ivana Trump.

There were, roughly speaking, three phases of the investigation into Parnas:

January through August 2019: Campaign Finance crimes

The first – which I laid out here – focused primarily on the campaign finance crimes. SDNY obtained two warrants in this period:

- January 18, 2019, 19 MJ 1729: For Yahoo and Google content
- May 16, 2019, 19 MJ 4784: For iCloud content

When DOJ did a search of Parnas and Fruman's residences the day they were arrested, the only crime listed on the warrants were the campaign finance crimes; they did this to hide the scope of the ongoing investigation. SDNY only unsealed the Fruman warrant, not the Parnas one (nor warrants in other districts targeting their co-defendants).

- October 9, 2019, SDFL 19-8415: Igor Fruman's residence

August through December 2019: Foreign Agent suspicions

After the firing of Marie Yovanovitch, SDNY investigated whether all Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman's influence-peddling served the interests of foreign principals – chiefly Ukrainian prosecutor Yuriy Lutsenko, but also other Ukrainians and maybe some Russians too.

SDNY obtained at least 8 warrants in this period (there are at least two, 19 MJ 7594 and 19 MJ 9830, which must be related – perhaps targeting their Russian backer, Andrey Muraviev? – but which SDNY withheld). And SDNY also withheld the November 2019 warrants targeting Rudy Giuliani.

- August 14, 2019, 19 MJ 7593: Yahoo and Google content since January, with expanded focus
- August 14, 2019, 19 MJ 7595: Existing Yahoo and Google content, with expanded focus
- October 17, 2019, 19 MJ 7595: Actual authorization of the warrant approved in August
- October 21, 2019, 19 MJ 9829: iCloud content since May
- October 21, 2019, 19 MJ 9831: Devices from Dulles
- October 21, 2019, 19 MJ 9832: Existing iCloud content for expanded focus
- November 4, 2019: Warrants targeting Rudy
- December 10, 2019, 19 MJ

11500: Stuff seized from residences for foreign agent focus

- December 10, 2019, 19 MJ 11501: Instagram

As I'll return to, it looks like Bill Barr intervened to halt SDNY's expanding investigation even earlier than previously disclosed, in December 2019 rather than January 2020.

The only additional warrants SDNY served after December 10, 2019 in the foreign agent investigation was a warrant obtained in March 2020 because Fruman had not synced his iCloud with his phone until after SDNY obtained the May 2019 warrants, meaning some of the texts and chats he had already sent were not in the earlier warrant return.

- March 20, 2020, 20 MJ 3074: iCloud content obtained with October 21, 2019 to cover earlier periods

Effectively, SDNY discovered that they had obtained content in October 2019 pertaining to events in 2018 and earlier in 2019 that hadn't been available when they first got Fruman's iCloud in May 2019, so they asked to use the October 2019 warrant for the earlier periods.

This may mean that Fruman, like Parnas, deleted some of his content on his phones.

December 2019 through March 2020: Fraud Guarantee fraud

Starting on December 12, 2019 – two days after the foreign agent investigation halted – SDNY spent several months trying to figure out what Fraud Guarantee actually was.

- December 12, 2019, 19 MJ

- 11651: Google for longer period and expanded focus
- January 21, 2020, 20 MJ 740: Existing email content for expanded focus
- February 28, 2020, 20 MJ 2240: Google from creation date for Fraud Guarantee
- February 28, 2020, 20 MJ 2241: Parnas iCloud for expanded focus

SDNY originally had believed, in 2018, that Fraud Guarantee was a recent creation, one serving as another means to launder political donations. But they had to keep digging further and further back, to 2012, to try to figure out what Fraud Guarantee really was.

The Instagram pivot

I'm still triple checking my own work, but SDNY appears *not* to have complied with SDNY's order to release all this backup. In addition to withholding the warrant for the search of Lev Parnas' residence on October 9, 2019 (though that's likely to be nearly indistinguishable from the one used to search Fruman's residence, which was obtained in the same docket), I don't think they released *the affidavit* for the December 10, 2019 search of the devices seized at the residences for foreign agent crimes.

That's the one that should have the most expansive description of the foreign agent investigation (and, I suspect, of the financing behind the effort to fire Marie Yovanovitch and obtain dirt on Hunter Biden, which I'll return to). I suspect the affidavit is closer in content to the one used to seize Rudy's email in November 2019 than what was unsealed the other day.

The Instagram warrant obtained that same day

necessarily used a different affidavit, partly because it included all the crimes under investigation (broadly, the campaign finance crimes and the suspected foreign agent crimes), but also because it was looking for a different kind of information: mostly, but not entirely, photos that Parnas had posted.

But there's something *really* weird about it, which has made me obsess about Ivana Trump.

The warrant suggests SDNY learned about the Instagram account from this WSJ video.

As you'll note, WSJ describes that the oldest thing on the account was an April 2015 photo of a dog, then this photo, showing Parnas and co-defendant David Correia with Ivana Trump, at what he billed as a "Fraud Guarantee pow wow."



As WSJ notes, the next things in Parnas' Instagram account are photos showing him getting access to Trump from very early on in Trump's campaign, in 2015 (as I'll return to, Parnas' 2016 access peddling is something that the warrants focus on more than the coverage of Parnas ever did). Then there's a break in the Instagram account until summer 2018, when it returns to its focus on political access. The Instagram shows Parnas' work with Rudy to dig up dirt on Hunter Biden and the 2016 election. It ends (again, per WSJ), with their trip days after the Perfect Phone Call to Madrid, to continue that effort.

SDNY obtained this warrant just two days before

the investigation shifted focus to Fraud Guarantee. When they obtained the warrant, they undoubtedly had all the questions they spent the next two months pursuing.

Yet SDNY limited the temporal scope of this warrant to postings starting on October 1, 2015 – effectively excluding only the photo of the dog and some event with Ivana trump six months before Parnas started insinuating himself into Trump's *political* orbit, one pertaining to Fraud Guarantee.

To the extent materials are dated, this warrant is limited to materials created between October 1, 2015, which is the month in which it appears Parnas first posted a photo related to a political event, to the present.

Did *Ivana* have some pre-existing relationship with Lev Parnas, one that dates to months before Lev started serially insinuating himself into Donald Trump's orbit?

And if she did, why didn't SDNY want that photo?