

A THIRD TIE BETWEEN TRUMP WORLD AND ALEXANDER SMIRNOV

Before I point to a report on third known link between Alexander Smirnov – the FBI informant whose allegedly false claims about Joe Biden were laundered through a process Bill Barr set up for Rudy Giuliani in 2020 – and Donald Trump, let me lay out several details that are important to assessing the import of such ties.

- Smirnov was admonished on the limits of permission to engage in Otherwise Illegal Activities on at least five occasions, including on August 7, 2020. That's what the FBI does before they pre-approve you committing a crime because they want to learn about the *other* people committing crimes involved. For any given sketchy business someone reports Smirnov to have engaged in, there's a distinct possibility he was engaging in it because the FBI was interested in the *other* people engaged in the business.
- Smirnov's ties to Russian spies go through at least one other intelligence service – probably Israel. But, at least for the last six months, he has been

hanging out on the megayachts of Russian Oligarchs, almost certainly in Dubai, where, according to him, he was part of a plan to end the Ukraine war and elect Donald Trump.

- One unanswered question that will be key to understanding how Smirnov attempted to frame Joe Biden is to identify how MAGA US Attorney for Pittsburgh Scott Brady came to chase an otherwise unremarkable earlier Smirnov informant report mentioning Hunter Biden in passing. Given that Brady's project catered to Rudy, any link involving Rudy as well would be significant.
- But we may not discover that unless something dramatic happens, because David Weiss has no business overseeing this investigation, as he's a direct witness to the involvement of Brady and Bill Barr. Indeed, as Hunter Biden attorney Abbe Lowell recently pointed out, Weiss has *misrepresented* his involvement in the Smirnov lead, going back to 2020, and by chasing this lead and extending the prosecution of

Hunter Biden, he is effectively doing Russia's bidding.

We already know of two ties between Trump world and Smirnov. His cousin, Linor Shefer, has ties to Trump through a Miami Real Estate developer.

Shefer, a 38-year-old Israeli-American, was a former contestant on the Israeli version of reality show Big Brother, and in 2014 won the Moscow beauty pageant 'Miss Jewish Star'.

According to her LinkedIn page, she has been an 'Inhouse Consultant' for Dezer Development in Miami, Florida since 2022.

Dezer partnered with Trump's organization to develop the \$600 million Trump Grande Ocean Resort and Residences and \$900 million Trump Towers. The company is run by Gil Dezer, and founded by his Israeli-American billionaire father Michael, who is a Trump donor.

And Smirnov has ties to Sam Kislin, who not only has long-standing ties to Rudy and Trump, but who came under some scrutiny during the 2019 impeachment.

Around 2021, on the beach at a private club in Boca Raton, Smirnov pitched Kislin on founding a company together that would market electric-car batteries and capture federal subsidies, Kislin said.

Smirnov told him he also could use his FBI ties to help him unfreeze more than \$21 million in infrastructure bonds that belonged to Kislin but which Ukrainian authorities deemed had been issued illegally, embroiling Kislin in a corruption probe, Kislin said.

Kislin had for years been seeking to

unfreeze the funds, traveling to Ukraine and meeting with officials there. His travel there coincided with efforts by Giuliani and his associates to push the Ukrainian government to investigate Biden, and in 2019, Kislin was subpoenaed by House impeachment investigators who were looking into those efforts. Kislin's lawyer said he didn't have relevant information, and he didn't ultimately testify.

Smirnov set his fee for recovering Kislin's \$21 million at \$1 million, according to Kislin, who said he paid Smirnov \$224,000—partially as an advance and partially as an investment in the car-battery company, incorporated in Nevada in May 2021 as Quantum Force.

After a little over a year, Quantum Force dissolved and registered by the same name in a different state—this time without Smirnov listed in the corporate records.

When a solution to Kislin's problem in Ukraine failed to materialize, Kislin said he deduced that Smirnov had taken him for a ride.

The Guardian points to a third – one through another of the sketchy businesses with which Smirnov worked, which includes a Middle East real estate tie:

Back in 2020, Smirnov was paid \$600,000 by a company called Economic Transformation Technologies (ETT), prosecutors said. That same year, Smirnov began lying to the FBI about the Bidens, according to the indictment.

ETT's CEO is the American Christopher Condon, who is also one of three shareholders in ETT Investment Holding Limited in London. Other shareholders in the UK include Pakistani American

investor Shahal Khan and Farooq Arjomand, a former chairman and current board member of Damac Properties in Dubai who is also listed as an adviser on ETT's American website.

[snip]

The exact business model of Texas-based ETT is murky. Its mission statement reads in part: "ETT set up the chess board to bring in top notch executives from those sectors to help implement its vision of love and social impact to improve the quality of human existence through the application of 'new age' technologies."

The current CEO, Condon, is a California man who has been involved in several civil lawsuits, including a civil Rico case in 2010 that he won on appeal. Condon's official biography says he is "a former professional tennis player, financial advisor, and currently is an entrepreneur focused on social-impact projects, public-private partnerships, and creating smart communities that benefit both individuals and governments".

Condon, Arjomand and Khan registered ETT Investment Holding Limited in the UK on 6 March 2020. Khan, an investor who purchased the Plaza Hotel in 2018, and Arjomand have ties to Donald Trump through Trump associates and Damac, a major Middle East developer that has partnered with Trump for a decade. Arjomand, Khan and Condon owned 34%, 33% and 33% of ETT Investment Holding Limited respectively, according to UK business filings. No other information on the UK company is readily available.

The WSJ story – the same one that focused on Kislin – already laid out some sketchy aspects

of Smirnov's ties to ETT, and states that the relationship began in 2019.

Smirnov helped another company—Texas-based Economic Transformation Technologies, a software platform focused on “sovereign economic performance”—solicit investors starting around 2019, former associates said.

Smirnov was aware of concerns among investors and employees about some of the company's practices, one of the associates said. The company was failing to pay some of its bills and several of its employees despite spending lavishly on travel and maintaining its exorbitant rent in the Dallas Cowboys headquarters, former associates and investors said.

Still, Smirnov brought in investors to meet with the company's chairman, Christopher Condon, and other company executives—among them Kislin, who didn't ultimately invest. Condon described Smirnov to associates as a “Russian friend of ours” who was skilled at fundraising, a former associate said.

It described that Condon knew of Smirnov's FBI ties.

Smirnov's FBI connections often came up in conversation as he hawked his services. Condon, the ETT chairman, also told people that Smirnov had “friends” in the FBI and described him as his protector who could help shield him from investigations, former associates said. Condon's lawyer said Condon didn't know the extent of Smirnov's FBI involvement, and Condon denied describing Smirnov as a protector.

There are a lot more details of the Trump ties of Khan and Arjomand in the Guardian piece. What's not included in there is the date in 2020

that ETT paid Smirnov. Particularly given Condon's other sketchy ties, if that payment was anywhere close to August 2020, when we know Smirnov was given permission to engage in otherwise illegal activity, it may be his business ties were done with the knowledge and permission of the FBI.

Of course, the people with whom he engaged in OIA could well have a link to Scott Brady's discovery of Smirnov. That's why it is so problematic that Weiss, a witness, is leading this investigation.

In a status hearing for Hunter Biden yesterday (at which his gun trial was tentatively scheduled for the first two weeks of June), prosecutor Derek Hines suggested the Smirnov trial is still set to go starting on April 23, in spite of a recent CIPA filing. Also yesterday, Judge Otis Wright denied Smirnov's bid to be released to San Francisco to receive glaucoma care.

Update: Fixed spelling of Shefer's first name.

Update: CBS has a story describing a past complaint that Smirnov is a fraudster and a liar. Again, it's hard to distinguish, without knowing more, whether for the FBI, that was the point.

Smirnov surfaced as a key secret witness in a sweeping racketeering case in California in 2015. In that case, the Justice Department brought charges against 33 defendants with ties to Armenian organized crime groups. Among the charges were money laundering, health care fraud and even a murder-for-hire.

Smirnov's information contributed to the case against a married couple, Tigran Sarkisyan and his wife Hripsime Khachatryan, charged with conspiring with others to use fake identities to collect tax reimbursements from the federal government. The couple

eventually pleaded guilty to a single count of racketeering in May 2017. In a 2018 sentencing memorandum, the couple's lawyers flatly accused Smirnov of deceit.

"The [Confidential Human Source] was known to the United States as a liar and fraudster," the sentencing brief states.

A footnote in the document states that the government was provided with the notes of their private investigator's interview with a close associate of Smirnov who repeatedly called him a "liar."

[snip]

Benincasa believes federal prosecutors realized they had a problem. According to Benincasa, the prosecutors had originally indicated they would be seeking a 10-year sentence as part of any plea deal. But after the lawsuit was filed, the government softened its position. Benincasa said he believes prosecutors wanted to avoid seeing Smirnov deposed in the civil case and possibly have his identity as an informant exposed. In the end prosecutors asked for 21 months, an unusually sharp reduction from the original 10 years that Benincasa says they were seeking. The judge ultimately sentenced the couple to 15 months.