

MICHAEL SHERWIN FAILED TO BRIEF MERRICK GARLAND ON TRUMP'S SUSPECTED EGYPTIAN PAYMENT

WaPo significantly advances the story of the suspected \$10 million Egyptian payment to Trump – including the role of China in it.

The investigation started when the CIA got a tip from a reliable informant that Egypt had paid Trump the money.

In early 2017, Justice Department officials were briefed on initial reports from the Central Intelligence Agency that Sisi had sought to send money to Trump.

The intelligence had come partly from a confidential informant who had previously provided useful information, according to people familiar with the matter.

That led to Mueller's focus on Trump's decision to inject the same amount into his campaign after meeting with Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in September 2016.

Trump repeatedly declined – until Oct. 28, roughly five weeks after the meeting with Sisi, when he announced the \$10 million infusion.

As described, Mueller focused on Trump's finances in 2016, but prohibited investigators from looking at his finances after he became President. Instead, they subpoenaed the Egyptian National Bank, which led to the extended legal fight. Materials finally provided by the bank showed a transfer from Shanghai..

The Research and Studies Center opened an account at the bank's Heliopolis branch in November 2015, the bank's records showed. In August 2016, the center opened a second account, this time in the bank's Shanghai branch. Five days after that, a company that investigators believed was tied to an Egyptian oligarch initiated a transfer of \$10 million into the center's Shanghai account, records showed.

The transfer was held up, then cleared for deposit in Shanghai in December, the records showed. The same amount was transferred from that account to the center's account at the Heliopolis branch shortly before the cash withdrawal there on Jan. 15, 2017.

Three days later, the center closed its account in Shanghai. Within 90 days, its account in Heliopolis was closed, too.

... And following that, a request from a likely Egyptian intelligence front to withdraw the same sum in cash.

A short handwritten letter dated Jan. 15, 2017, in which an organization called the Research and Studies Center asked that the bank "kindly withdraw a sum of US \$9,998,000" from its Heliopolis branch, located about seven miles from Cairo International Airport. According to the bank records, employees assembled the money that same day, entirely in U.S. \$100 bills, put it in two large bags and kept it in the bank manager's office until two men associated with the account and two others came and took away the cash.

In summer 2019, after being spun under DC USAO, the FBI was asking for permission to subpoena records from Trump's 2017 finances. But then

Jessie Liu met with Bill Barr, reviewed the underlying CIA intelligence herself, and grew hesitant about further investigative steps.

Sometime after her June meetings with the FBI, Liu met with Barr to discuss the Egypt case. He urged her to personally review the underlying information from the CIA that had prompted the opening of the criminal investigation two years earlier, according to people with knowledge of the discussions.

[snip]

Sometime around September 2019, FBI agents and a supervisor from the field office presented what they considered an ultimatum to Liu: authorize getting Trump's 2017 bank records or it wasn't worth continuing to investigate, according to people later briefed on the exchange. Liu listened but turned them down; she said she wasn't closing the case and was open to subpoenaing Trump's records later on if agents turned up more compelling evidence to justify doing so, these people said.

After Barr replaced Liu with first Tim Shea and then Michael Sherwin, Sherwin shut down the investigation on June 7, 2020.

Sherwin, the only person quoted in the piece, taunted that Merrick Garland could have reopened the case.

In an interview with The Post, Sherwin said Biden administration appointees, including Attorney General Merrick Garland, who took over the department months later, could have relaunched the probe if they disagreed. "The case was closed without prejudice," he said. "Anyone could have reopened the case the second I left that office."

The case was not reopened.

Except, as the last paragraph of the story describes, partly amid the rush of cases in the wake of January 6, Garland and his top aides were never briefed on the case in their first year in office – which for Garland, who wasn't sworn in until March 11, 2021, would be March 2022.

Garland, senior members of his team, and Biden's new U.S. attorney in D.C. were never briefed on the Egypt investigation in their first year in office, one former and one current government official told The Post.

The Statute of Limitations expired on January 15, 2022.

There's still at least one hole in this story.

The money was deposited in Shanghai in August 2016. That's before the September meeting between al-Sisi and Trump. Though at a time when Trump's people – including both George Papadopoulos, who played a key role in setting up the meeting with al-Sisi, and Walid Phares, who was investigated for ties to Middle Eastern intelligence – were negotiating a meeting with Russia, in London, in September 2016.

Papadopoulos communicated with Clovis and Walid Phares, another member of the foreign policy advisory team, about an off-the-record meeting between the Campaign and Russian government officials or with Papadopoulos's other Russia connections, Mifsud and Timofeev.⁴⁸⁰ Papadopoulos also interacted directly with Clovis and Phares in connection with the summit of the Transatlantic Parliamentary Group on Counterterrorism (TAG), a group for which Phares was co-secretary general.⁴⁸¹ On July 16, 2016, Papadopoulos attended the TAG summit in

Washington, D.C., where he sat next to Clovis (as reflected in the photograph below).482

Although Clovis claimed to have no recollection of attending the TAG summit,483 Papadopoulos remembered discussing Russia and a foreign policy trip with Clovis and Phares during the event.484 Papadopoulos’s recollection is consistent with emails sent before and after the TAG summit. The pre-summit messages included a July 11, 2016 email in which Phares suggested meeting Papadopoulos the day after the summit to chat, 485 and a July 12 message in the same chain in which Phares advised Papadopoulos that other summit attendees “are very nervous about Russia. So be aware.”486 Ten days after the summit, Papadopoulos sent an email to Mifsud listing Phares and Clovis as other “participants” in a potential meeting at the London Academy of Diplomacy.487

Finally, Papadopoulos’s recollection is also consistent with handwritten notes from a journal at that time.488

[snip]

<p>September:</p> <p>Have an exploratory meeting to or lose. In September – if allowed they will blast Mr. Trump.</p> <p>We want the meeting in London/England</p> <p>Walid/Sam me</p> <p>No official letter/no message from Trump</p> <p>They are talking to us.</p> <p>-It is a lot of risk.</p> <p>-Office of Putin.</p> <p>-Explore: we are a campaign.</p> <p>off Israel! EGYPT</p> <p>Willingness to meet the FM sp with Walid/Sam</p> <p>-FM coming</p> <p>-Useful to have a session with him.</p>	<p>September:</p> <p>Have an exploratory meeting to or lose. In September – if allowed they will blast Mr. Trump.</p> <p>• we want the meeting Walid/Sam me in London/England</p> <p>to official letter / re message from Trump</p> <p>• they are talking to us.</p> <p>- It is a lot of risk.</p> <p>- office of Putin.</p> <p>- Explore: we are a campaign.</p> <p>off Israel! EGYPT</p> <p>willingness to meet the FM sp with Walid/Sam.</p> <p>- FM coming</p> <p>- Useful to have a session with him.</p>
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These are the notes that Papadopoulos professed to be unable to read when meeting with Mueller’s investigators.

This story is also silent about Russia’s role in

convincing Egypt to withdraw a UN resolution against Israel after Trump intervened in December 2016.

Finally, recall that Erik Prince and Kyrill Dmitriev met in the Seychelles on January 11 and 12.