

JULY 22, 2016: THE SATER AND COHEN DEAL GETS HANDED OFF TO MILLIAN AND PAPADOPOULOS?

Last night on TV, Anthony Cormier said that the negotiations between Michael Cohen and Felix Sater actually continued into July, but that the later discussions were on encrypted chats that got deleted.

We know that Sater was at Trump Tower on July 21, 2016, because he bought some campaign swag that showed up in FEC filings. (h/t Andrew Rice on Twitter)

Sater told POLITICO he was unaware he had exceeded the maximum contribution. Informed that purchases of campaign paraphernalia count as contributions, Sater said he had bought campaign merchandise in the basement of Trump Tower last month. He said he made two \$2,700 contributions to the Trump campaign online through his iPad.

The purchase of campaign merchandise and two contributions for \$2,700 each are all dated July 21 in the FEC filing.

That same day, George Papadopoulos signaled something to Ivan Timofeev about Trump's RNC speech.

"How are things [Timofeev]? Keep an eye on the speech tonight. Should be good."

The next day is almost certainly when Sergei Millian first started cultivating Papadopoulos.

Millian's cultivation of Papadopoulos

likely explains this reference in the affidavit supporting Papadopoulos' arrest, showing Papadopoulos asking Ivan Timofeev over Facebook on July 22, 2016 for any information he had on someone he was about to meet for the first time (see my timeline here).

"If you know any background of him that is noteworthy before I see him, kindly send my way."

That would say that, on the same day WikiLeaks released the DNC emails – which itself took place a day after Papadopoulos signaled something about Trump's RNC speech to Timofeev – Millian started cultivating Papadopoulos, who apparently had started spending more time in NYC.

That relationship would lead to a proposed business deal between Millian and Papadopoulos – basically as cut-outs for the business deal that Cohen and Sater started.

Mr. Trump's improbable victory raised Mr. Papadopoulos's hopes that he might ascend to a top White House job. The election win also prompted a business proposal from Sergei Millian, a naturalized American citizen born in Belarus. After he had contacted Mr. Papadopoulos out of the blue over LinkedIn during the summer of 2016, the two met repeatedly in Manhattan.

[snip]

Mr. Millian proposed that he and Mr. Papadopoulos form an energy-related business that would be financed by Russian billionaires "who are not under sanctions" and would "open all doors for us" at "any level all the way to the top."

One billionaire, he said, wanted to explore the idea of opening a Trump-branded hotel in Moscow. "I know the president will distance himself from business, but his children might be interested," he wrote.

Apparently, a new witness recently went to the FBI to describe Papadopoulos' continued involvement in this deal – and his direct ties to Trump.

The letter, dated November 19 and obtained last week by *The Atlantic*, was sent to Democratic Representative Adam Schiff's office by an individual who claims to have been close to Papadopoulos in late 2016 and early 2017. The letter was brought to the attention of Schiff and House Intelligence Committee staff, according to an aide who requested anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. The letter was also obtained by federal authorities, who are taking its claims "very seriously," said two U.S. officials who also requested anonymity because of the sensitivities of the probe.

The statement makes a series of explosive but uncorroborated claims about Papadopoulos's alleged coordination with Russians in the weeks following Trump's election in November 2016, including that Papadopoulos said he was "doing a business deal with Russians which would result in large financial gains for himself and Mr. Trump." The confidant—whose name *The Atlantic* is withholding on request but whose identity is known to congressional and federal investigators—stated a willingness to take a polygraph test "to prove that I am being truthful" and had come forward now after seeing Papadopoulos "become increasingly

hostile towards those who are investigating him and his associates." A lawyer for Papadopoulos declined to comment.

[snip]

The confidant who sent the letter to Schiff's office last week claimed to have witnessed a phone call between Papadopoulos and Trump in December 2016, around the same time that Papadopoulos was allegedly boasting about the Russia deal and sending emails to Flynn and Trump's campaign CEO, Steve Bannon. In one email, Flynn urged Papadopoulos to "stay in touch, and, at some point, we should get together." Trump has called Papadopoulos "a coffee boy" who played no meaningful role on the campaign.

In his sentencing memorandum, Papadopoulos alluded to his concern about getting the job he expected in the Trump Administration (on which the deal with Millian was premised) to explain why he lied to the FBI in January 2017.

The agents asked George to accompany them to their office to answer a "couple questions" regarding "a guy in New York that you might know[,] [t]hat has recently been in the news." George thought the agents wanted to ask him about Russian businessman Sergei Millian. Wanting clarification, he asked the agents, "...just so I understand, I'm going there to answer questions about this person who I think you're talking about." The agents assured George that the topic of discussion was Mr. Millian who had been trending in the national media.

En route to the FBI office, George voiced concern about the repercussions of his cooperation ever becoming public because the Wall Street Journal had just

reported that Sergei Millian was a key source in the "Trump Dossier" controversy. George explained that he was in discussions with senior Trump administration officials about a position and the last thing he wanted was "something like this" casting the administration in a bad light.

[snip]

George knew Mr. Millian only as a businessman pitching an opportunity to George in his personal capacity. The agents asked how they first met, what they discussed, how often they talked or met in person, if George knew whether Mr. Millian was connected to Russia or a foreign intelligence service, and who else on Mr. Trump's campaign may have been in contact with Mr. Millian.

[snip]

George found himself personally conflicted during the interrogation as he felt obligated to assist the FBI but also wanted to distance himself and his work on the Trump campaign from that investigation. Attempting to reconcile these competing interests, George provided information he thought was important to the investigation while, at the same time, misleading the agents about the timing, nature, and extent of his contacts with Professor Mifsud, Olga, and Ivan Timofeev. In his answers, George falsely distanced his interactions with these players from his campaign work. At one point, George told the agents that he did not want to "get too in-depth" because he did not know what it would mean for his professional future.

[snip]

Out of loyalty to the new president and

his desire to be part of the administration, he hoisted himself upon his own petard.

All of that suggests the deal was still on in January 2017, and Papadopoulos was trying to preserve his opportunity to serve as a cut-out for the deal and so lied to the FBI.

Mind you, it may be that the deal was not entirely handed off. Glenn Simpson told HPSCI that Fusion had substantiated ties between Millian and Cohen (though I hope he looked further than Twitter).

And then, you know, as further time went on, we found he was connected to Michael Cohen, the President's lawyer. And eventually, after boasting about a lot of this stuff on camera, on tape, to the TV network, he backed away from all of it suddenly when the Russia controversy began to get hot.

And Michael Cohen was very adamant that he didn't actually have a connection to Sergi, even though he was one of only like 100 people who followed Sergi on Twitter. And they – we had Twitter messages back and forth between the two of them just – we just pulled them off of Twitter.

In a blockbuster follow-up to their May report that laid out all this Trump Tower stuff, BuzzFeed hints at other people Cohen was in contact with, who also were involved in the hack and leak operation.

Two FBI agents with direct knowledge of the Trump Tower Moscow negotiations told BuzzFeed News earlier this year that Cohen was in frequent contact with foreign individuals about the real estate venture – and that some of these individuals had knowledge of or played a role in 2016 election meddling. The

identity of those individuals remains unknown.

Which of course would make it unsurprising if July 22, the same day WikiLeaks released the DNC emails, was the day the real estate deal backing it up would get handed off to further obscure it.

Update: In this really report on Cohen's plea, Rudy sounds like he's not sure whether the deal went forward or not.

"The president, as far as he knows, he remembers there was such a proposal for a hotel," Giuliani said. "He talked it over with Cohen as Cohen said. There was a nonbinding letter of intent that was sent. As far as he knows it never came to fruition. That was kind of the end of it."