

# **“I HATE THE WORD GUILTY” SAYS THE SELF- DESCRIBED “CONDUIT” BETWEEN THE AGALAROV AND TRUMP**

As you read Rob Goldstone’s efforts to telegraph what his potential testimony to Robert Mueller will be, keep the lesson of this post in mind: there is evidence that one-time Trump attorney and current Agalarov attorney Scott Balber has, on three occasions, attempted to orchestrate a cover story for the June 9 meeting that Goldstone set up. Those three are:

1. A meeting between Rinat Akhmetshin and Ike Kaveladze (the latter of whom Balber represents as an employee of Agalarov) in Moscow in June 2017, just as Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort were both belatedly disclosing the meeting to various authorities; this story appears to have been an attempt to pre-empt the damage that would be done when Akhmetshin’s involvement became public
2. A Balber trip sometime before October to Russia to coordinate a story with and get documents from Natalia Veselnitskaya to back her version of the talking points she reportedly shared

with Trump's people

3. Another October story, this "revealing" that Veselnitskaya's research came from (or actually was shared with) Russian prosecutor Yuri Chaika, but insisting (per Balber) that Agalarov had no ties with the prosecutor

In fact, it has been recently confirmed that Veselnitskaya's research was originally done by Fusion GPS, the same firm that was doing oppo research for Clinton and would *almost simultaneously with the June 9 meeting* hire Christopher Steele to dig up dirt on Trump.

With that in mind, consider what Goldstone is now saying in advance of a reported trip to the US to voluntarily meet with Mueller.

First, Goldstone conflates interviewing with Mueller and the Senate Intelligence Committee with making his story public. But of course, this interview is what will make his story public (SSCI has gotten cranky of late when people release their testimony publicly before interviewing with the committee, so I guess this interview will substitute).

Although no date has yet been set, he has accepted invitations – unlike some others involved, he has not received a subpoena – to meet the team investigating the alleged Trump links with Russia, headed by Robert Mueller, the special counsel, as well as Senate investigative committees in Washington.

"I'm keen to talk to them and put my recollection of events in the public record," Goldstone says. So why is he choosing to do this interview now?

"After the story initially broke, it

seemed to quieten down for a while. But now it's back in the news with such force, I feel it's time for me to explain what happened."

That's really not much of an explanation for why he's talking now, suggesting it has everything to do with this planned testimony.

The dual US-British citizen claims both that he was distracted from the proceedings of the Trump Tower meeting because of a concern he'd get stuck in Lincoln Tunnel traffic on his way home, but also that his months-long absence from the US is just about wandering Asia rather than hiding out from these events.

He had not even planned to attend, but was encouraged to stay by Trump Jr. His biggest concern, he says, was that if the meeting dragged on, he would be caught in the notorious Lincoln Tunnel traffic on his journey home.

[snip]

We meet not in Manhattan, however, but in southeast Asia, where he has been travelling in recent months. One of his conditions of meeting me is that I do not disclose the precise whereabouts, because he does not want to be besieged by media, as he was when the controversy erupted in July.

"There are people saying that I've run away or I'm some sort of fugitive," he tells me. "But the simple thing is that I decided to keep quiet, and the best way to do that was to go off the radar and disappear for a while. But I want to share what I know."

[snip]

He knows his travels will be met with renewed suspicion that he went on the run to hide what he really knows. But there is no evasion, he insists.

When Goldstone claimed the trip was all coincidental I guess he didn't yet know that the AP would have already published news of the advance coordination of Rinat Akhmetshin and Ike Kaveladze's stories, the kind of advanced planning that might also explain this trip.

Goldstone explains that, several months before the scandal broke, he told friends – and The Sunday Times has separately confirmed this with them – that he was putting his business on hold and renting out his US apartment to travel the world, including a lengthy stay in Asia. The purpose, he told them, was to have the “gap year” that he never took after leaving school at 16 to start work as a reporter in Manchester.

And he denies any worry that Russian intelligence will knock him off to keep him silent.

“First of all, if Russian intelligence had used me in some way, as people perceive, but which I don't believe, then they'll know I don't know anything. If Russian intelligence hasn't used me, but are intelligent, they will equally know I don't know anything and this is all nonsense.”

In spite of emphasizing how little he knows, Goldstone describes himself as the “conduit” – on matters that include business deals in Russia!!! – between the Agalarovs and Trump, but then pretends to be squeamish about a little politics.

“So when people ask why some music publicist was involved in all this, well, I was always the conduit, the Mr Go-To, between the Agalarovs and the Trumps,” Goldstone says.

[snip]

"I remember specifically saying to Emin, you know, we probably shouldn't get involved in this. It's politics, it's Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Neither of us have any experience in this world. It's not our forte. I deal with music. You're a singer and a businessman."

However, Emin was insistent that Goldstone contact the Trumps. "His mantra was always 'Rob can do it'. All I had to do was facilitate a meeting, he said, after which I walk away from it and whatever comes of it, thank you very much.

[snip]

"I can apologise in some way for having sent the email in the first place. It went against everything my gut instinct was telling me."

Yet, he couples that claimed squeamishness about politics and gut instinct – and his claim he warned Emin they should stay out of it – with the claim that had this been offered months later, as the Russian scandal broke out, he'd be ... squeamish about the politics involved.

It never crossed his mind, he adds, that there would be any fallout about election rules or foreign influence.

"I didn't understand anything about that, nothing at all. This meeting happened months before Russia became the hot topic. If this had happened later, sure, I would've been aware because it's all people were talking about – Russia, and Russian interference. Hindsight is great, but it just wasn't being talked about at the time."

This makes no sense: either he recognized it was wrong and told Emin they shouldn't do it or he

only recognized it was wrong long after the fact. It can't be both.

Which brings us to his telegraphed description of his email and the meeting it set up. Goldstone describes being "guilty" only of puffing up the language around the meeting, not of facilitating election tampering that he admits may have otherwise occurred.

"If I'm guilty of anything, and I hate the word guilty, it's hyping the message and going the extra mile for my clients. Using hot-button language to puff up the information I had been given. I didn't make up the details, I just made them sound more interesting."

[snip]

So was he part of a Russian plot to influence the election? Goldstone rolls his eyes. "When people said that, I thought it was the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. That doesn't mean that maybe there wasn't any Russian interference or Trump campaign collusion in other ways. I don't know. But I'm sure I wasn't part of it."

And he claims that he thought Veselnitskaya – not Chaika – was the "crown prosecutor" he mentioned in the email he sent Don Jr.

Much has also been made of how Goldstone said Aras Agalarov had met Russia's "crown prosecutor". Given that Russia has not had a crown since the 1917 revolution, there was a widespread presumption that Goldstone was referring to Vladimir Putin's prosecutor general, Yuri Chaika. It has since been reported that the lawyer Veselnitskaya met Chaika in Moscow in the run-up to her trip to New York, sharing with him the talking points that she delivered at Trump Tower. But Goldstone insists Veselnitskaya was the one described to

him by Emin as a “well-connected prosecutor” and that in his haste, he had said “crown prosecutor” as that was a British term he used to use as a young reporter.

Here’s Goldstone’s email, which describes something far more sensitive than he’s now describing.

Emin just called and asked me to contact you with something very interesting.

The Crown prosecutor of Russia met with his father Aras this morning and in their meeting offered to provide the Trump campaign with some official documents and information that would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia and would be very useful to your father.

This is obviously very high level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump – helped along by Aras and Emin.

What do you think is the best way to handle this information and would you be able to speak to Emin about it directly?

I can also send this info to your father via Rhona, but it is ultra sensitive so wanted to send to you first.

Best

Rob Goldstone

Hmm. Folks seem awfully anxious about lining up their stories with the known documentation of this meeting. Yet even with Balber flying all over the world (has he perhaps been to Thailand to visit Goldstone, who after all is just another Agalarov employee, of sorts?) the stories don’t seem to be cohering.

Which may be why Goldstone provides an alternative version to Veselnitskaya's recent claim that Paul Manafort appeared to be asleep in the meeting, claiming that he was distracted by his messages.

Goldstone described Kushner as "furious" and said that Manafort did not seem to look up from checking his messages.

Funny how people on two continents want to claim that Manafort wasn't playing close attention.

Remember: there are at least four documents these players are trying to account for, even assuming the communications between people in Russia weren't picked up:

- Goldstone's emails with Don Jr
- The talking points Veselnitskaya claims to have shared at the meeting (but which Akhmetshin claims he only saw the Russian version of)
- Paul Manafort's own notes from the meeting
- Text messages between Rinat Akhmetshin and Ike Kaveladze before their cover-up meeting

And for some reason, Goldstone needs to claim he believed the prosecutor in question was Veselnitskaya and not Chaika, which is what the others claim.