

SCOTT BALBER'S LATEST NARRATIVE ON TRUMP TOWER

For some weeks, I've been tracking how sometime Trump and current Agalarov family lawyer Scott Balber has actively crafted a story about the June 9, 2016 Trump Tower meeting. Prior efforts to craft the story include:

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

4. Balber filled in a hole in the story for Goldstone: he told the Daily Beast that after his client Ike Kaveladze saw an email (from whom he doesn't describe) indicating that Jared Kushner, Paul Manafort, and Don Jr would be at the meeting, he called a close associate of Goldstone's (and a former employee of Balber's client), Roman Beniaminov, to find out what the meeting was about. That's the first he learned – at least as far as he told congressional investigators – that the meeting was about dealing “dirt” on Hillary.

Balber is back again in this CNN story. The story reveals two things.

First, Rob Goldstone tried to get the Trump campaign to establish a presence on VKontakte. The move is presented as some kind of marketing gimmick by CNN's sources, but it would also establish an easy communications vehicle that would be harder for US intelligence services to wiretap.

More interesting, however, is the revelation that Goldstone forwarded this story to Scott Balber's clients and observed that it was eerily weird given what had transpired at Trump Tower

earlier.

In one email dated June 14, 2016, Goldstone forwarded a CNN story on Russia's hacking of DNC emails to his client, Russian pop star Emin Agalarov, and Ike Kaveladze, a Russian who attended the meeting along with Trump Jr., Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and Manafort, describing the news as "eerily weird" given what they had discussed at Trump Tower five days earlier.

One of the sources familiar with the content of the email downplayed the interaction, saying news of the DNC hack was surprising because in the run-up to the Trump Tower meeting, the Russian participants had promised information on illicit Russian funding of the DNC. But that dirt was not provided to Trump Jr., Kushner and Manafort during the meeting, according to accounts from the participants.

The DNC hacking was not brought up at the meeting, another source said, explaining it would not be 'oddly weird' if the topic had been broached.

Which is where Balber comes in, trustworthy as always, insisting that hacked emails were not consistent with what was discussed at the meeting.

Scott Balber, the attorney for, confirms his client received the email but viewed it as odd because hacking was never discussed in the meeting and it was not consistent with what was discussed.

Balber, of course, has already intervened four times in this story to lay out a narrative – one I'm virtually certain is absolutely false – about what might be consistent with what was discussed. Given that both his clients received

this email, he would have known about the email from the very start – certainly by June 2017 when he was coordinating a meeting in Moscow to limit the damage of this story. This email would have been central to his prior four efforts to craft a story in which emails would never come up.

But Goldstone – who curiously didn't mention this email in his "I hate the word guilty" narrative of events, who has been hiding out in Thailand since this story broke and who expressed worry that Russian goons might take him out, who will be in DC next weeks for a bunch of interviews – seemed to think at the time the report of the stolen emails was eerily weird given what he had heard just days earlier.