

THE OLIGARCH “PEACE” OF THE PIE PLAN

I keep coming back to this post I wrote a year ago, arguing that the policy payoff phase of the Russian investigation appears to have as much to do with remapping the Middle East in exchange for personal enrichment as anything else (what I call ConFraudUs for foreign policy).

Kushner’s “peace plan” is not so much a plan for peace. It’s a plan for a complete remapping of the Middle East according to a vision the Israelis and Saudis have long been espousing (and note the multiple nods on Trump’s trip to the growing alliance between the two, including Trump’s flight directly from Riyadh to Tel Aviv and Bibi’s comment on “common dangers are turning former enemies into partners”). It’s a vision for still more oppression (a view that Trump supports globally, in any case).

Yes, it’d probably all be accomplished with corrupt self-enrichment on the part of all players.

Since then, Erin Banco (who first confirmed that Erik Prince had met with Kirill Dmitriev) revealed that Mueller is investigating several other meetings in the Seychelles, on top of the one involving Prince.

Special counsel Robert Mueller’s team is examining a series of previously unreported meetings that took place in 2017 in the Seychelles, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, as part of its broader investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, according to two sources briefed on the investigation.

The sources said several of those meetings took place around the same time

as another meeting in the Seychelles between Erik Prince, founder of the security company Blackwater, Kirill Dmitriev, the director of one of Russia's sovereign wealth funds, and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the effective ruler of the United Arab Emirates (also known as "MBZ"). Details of that earlier meeting were first reported by the Washington Post last year.

[snip]

Individuals connected to the Saudi financial system, including the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency and the Arab National Bank, flew into the island the second week of January 2017, as did an aircraft purportedly owned by the former deputy minister of defense, Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, flight records show. Other individuals on those aircraft held passports from Egypt and Singapore.

Dmitriev flew into the Seychelles Jan. 11, 2017 with his wife Natalia Popova and another woman with the last name Boldovskaia. Six other Russian individuals flew to the island just a few days after Dmitriev. The aircraft's ownership is unclear but it flew between Russia, Geneva and Cyprus in 2017.

Others on the island included Alexander Mashkevitch, an alleged financier of Bayrock, an investment vehicle linked to Trump, and Sheikh Abdulrahman Khalid BinMahfouz, according to flight records. BinMahfouz's father, before his death, was a billionaire and the former chairman of Saudi Arabia's first private bank.

Today, ABC has a report that not just Tom Barrack (who was interviewed last year), but

several others have been interviewed about foreign inauguration donations.

Barrack, a real estate investor, has long been described as a Trump “whisperer” whose close friendship with the president landed him a prime appearance during the GOP convention the night Trump accepted his party’s nomination.

The billionaire runs a fund with hundreds of millions in real estate and private equity holdings in the Middle East. Barrack oversaw the largest inaugural fundraising effort in U.S. history, bringing in \$107 million – more than double what President Barack Obama raised for his first swearing-in festivities.

According to a source who has sat with the Mueller team for interviews in recent weeks, the special counsel is examining donors who have either business or personal connections in Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

[snip]

Special counsel investigators have also asked witnesses about specific inauguration donors, including American businessmen Leonard Blavatnik, and Andrew Intrater, according to sources familiar with the Mueller sessions.

Blavatnik has been funding not just Trump, but Republicans generally, including (especially) Mitch McConnell.

An example is Len Blavatnik, a dual U.S.-U.K. citizen and one of the largest donors to GOP political action committees in the 2015-16 election cycle. Blavatnik’s family emigrated to the U.S. in the late ’70s from the

U.S.S.R. and he returned to Russia when the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late '80s.

Data from the Federal Election Commission show that Blavatnik's campaign contributions dating back to 2009-10 were fairly balanced across party lines and relatively modest for a billionaire. During that season he contributed \$53,400. His contributions increased to \$135,552 in 2011-12 and to \$273,600 in 2013-14, still bipartisan.

In 2015-16, everything changed. Blavatnik's political contributions soared and made a hard right turn as he pumped \$6.35 million into GOP political action committees, with millions of dollars going to top Republican leaders including Sens. Mitch McConnell, Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham.

Also note that all the Cohen side clients revealed by Michael Avenatti had some kind of tie to inauguration donations.

And remember that the leftover inauguration donations, which were supposed to be donated to charity, have simply disappeared (though Mueller, with subpoena power, may well know precisely where it went).

This all seems like an effort by a bunch of oligarchs to take remap the world in their self-interest.