

THE MANAFORT LINK SETS THE FRUMAN- PARNAS TIMELINE BACK — BUT THE MANAFORT TIMELINE IS EARLIER TOO

The Daily Beast reports that Lev Parnas has linked Igor Fruman and Paul Manafort going back years.

Rudy Giuliani ally Igor Fruman and ex-Trump campaign chief Paul Manafort have been friendly for years, two sources familiar with their relationship tell The Daily Beast.

And that relationship – stretching from New York to London to Kyiv – long predated Rudy Giuliani’s wide-ranging attempts to discredit the evidence that played a key role in kicking off Manafort’s political downfall and eventual incarceration.

Joseph Bondy, the lawyer for Fruman associate Lev Parnas, said Manafort and Fruman were friendly for years before their respective indictments.

A friend of Manafort’s, who spoke anonymously to discuss non-public matters, confirmed that Fruman and Manafort have known each other for years. He said Fruman invited Manafort to the opening party for Buddha-Bar in Kyiv many years ago, and that the two men have discussed business. Buddha-Bar opened in the summer of 2008. Bondy said the pair also spent time together in London and New York.

It suggests, but does not say outright, that the

Ukrainian grifters' initial work served to put together the counter-report that Rudy Giuliani planned to release to combat the Mueller Report.

In late 2018, as the Mueller investigation was drawing to a close, Giuliani and his allies worked to draft a counter-report that would rebut Mueller's work. (Manafort was one of the first targets of Mueller's probe, and was convicted of multiple charges related to work he did in Ukraine for a Russia-friendly political party.) Giuliani never released that report. But he also didn't toss it; he told *The Daily Beast* in October that materials he gave the State Department came from his effort to find information in Ukraine that could exonerate Trump.

[snip]

In other words, Giuliani's efforts to undermine the Mueller probe—and stand up for Manafort—led directly to his Biden dirt-digging endeavors. Parnas has said he and Fruman were right there to help.

This report explains a great deal about the story we've got. It explains why Lev Parnas was badmouthing Marie Yovanovitch long before (he claims) Trump flunkies' attacks on her led him to adopt that line. It explains why Kevin Downing was on the Joint Defense team for the Ukrainian grifters. It basically extends the narrative about the grifters back to 2018, when SDNY started it.

Except the story TDB tells still starts the narrative too late in time.

It suggests that the reason Rudy started chasing propaganda in Ukraine is because Paul Manafort's life started falling apart after news of his inclusion in the Black Ledger got published on August 14, 2016.

Relations with Ukraine have shadowed

Trump and his allies even before he was elected president. On August 14, 2016, *The New York Times* reported that Manafort may have received millions of dollars in “illegal, off-the-books” cash from the pro-Russia political party he worked for. The story was a body blow to Manafort, who left Trump’s campaign five days after it was published. Serhiy Leshchenko, then a Ukrainian parliamentarian, played an instrumental role in the black ledger.

In the years after the publication of the story, Manafort’s life fell apart. Nine months after Trump’s inauguration, he was arrested and charged with a host of crimes. By March 2019, he had been sentenced to a seven-year prison term. He and his allies blamed the black ledger for starting the calamity. And given that Leshchenko was a government official when he shared the documents, Trump’s allies have said their release was an example of election meddling by Kyiv. Parnas told *The Daily Beast* that Giuliani tried to push Leshchenko away from Zelensky; Giuliani himself has called him an enemy of the United States.

Giuliani has said his scrutiny of the black ledger fed directly into his focus on the Bidens.

That’s certainly the story that Manafort would like to tell – and one that likely is palatable for Parnas. In that story, his grift is exclusively about finding propaganda that is useful to the President, and he can point back to the President as the agent behind his actions.

Except Manafort’s life was going to shit before that, and the grifters were active before they could have been writing a counter-report.

Manafort's life started going to shit when Viktor Yanukovych was ousted from Ukraine. He lost his main clients and had both the debt from his own lavish lifestyle but also the \$20 million that Oleg Deripaska said Manafort had bilked him out of. By January 2016, DOJ was already investigating him for money laundering. By March, according to Rick Gates, he was effectively broke.

That's when he signed up to work for Donald Trump for "free."

During the entire time he worked for Trump, Deripaska was using Christopher Steele to encourage the criminal investigation into Manafort, even while enticing Manafort with the hope of "making him whole" by performing some unspecified services – effectively making Manafort (and by association, Trump) more vulnerable for the moment he'd move in for the kill. Two months before the Black Ledger was publicly released, Manafort knew he was on it. And before the Black Ledger story broke, Manafort took a meeting with Konstantin Kilimnik, who had promised a scheme to return Yanukovych to a position where he could turn on Manafort's gravy train again. It's still unclear what happened at the meeting, but it's clear winning the Rust Belt, carving up Ukraine, and getting paid all came up. Eight days later, Manafort booked \$2.4 million – deliverable in November – suggesting he believed that that meeting did lead to him getting paid. And until the time Manafort landed in prison, he took actions in accordance with the plan to carve up Ukraine in that August 2, 2016 meeting.

That's the background to the Black Ledger release. And that's the reason Manafort needs some story, however bogus, to justify a pardon.

Moreover, the grifters' timing dates to April 2018, about the time Ukraine purchased some Javelins and stopped cooperating with Mueller, which probably explains why a guy working for Raytheon's lobbyist, Kurt Voker, was perceived to be working on Manafort's defense.

Manafort doesn't (just) need a story that can justify a Trump pardon. He needs a way to prevent the rest of this story from coming out.