

New Manafort docs appear to contradict own lobbying claims

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New court documents offer potential evidence that Paul Manafort's team lobbied on behalf of the Ukrainian government in the U.S.



Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort is not set to face trial on lobbying-related charges until September. But he will face trial next week on separate Mueller charges of tax evasion, bank fraud and failing to report foreign bank accounts. | Andrew Harnik/AP

New documents filed in court by Paul Manafort's lawyers appear to contradict his legal team's own claims that the former Trump campaign chairman's team only lobbied on behalf of the Ukrainian government in Europe.

The revelation could be important as Manafort is trying to fend off charges from special counsel Robert Mueller that Manafort failed to register as a foreign agent in connection with his lobbying work for the Ukrainian government. Earlier this year, Mueller accused Manafort and his former deputy, Rick Gates, of secretly organizing a group of former European politicians known as the "Hapsburg group" to lobby in the U.S. for former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his party.

But, according to prosecutors, Manafort and his longtime associate, Konstantin Kilimnik, pressed those involved in the lobbying campaign to stress that the effort was focused exclusively on the European Union. A federal judge later ruled that Manafort was attempting to tamper with the testimony of potential witnesses and [ordered him jailed](#) over the incident.

Thursday's documents — filed as part of a motion in court seeking to withhold more than 50 pieces of evidence from the jury in the upcoming trial — could complicate the EU-focused narrative. Several exhibits included in the court filing seem to contradict Kilimnik's assertion that the Hapsburg group never lobbied in Washington.

"The Hapsburg team will also do a series of events between March and May in Washington DC designed to change the public rhetoric directed at Ukraine, but to also influence key members of the US Government through private meetings held at the highest levels," Manafort wrote to Yanukvych in a memo dated Feb. 21, 2013. "This will include major speeches, participation in key events, and private meetings with senior US officials including Secretary of State John Kerry, and other members of the Administration."

A spokesman for Manafort declined to comment.

The memo isn't the first evidence that the Hapsburg group — which included a former Austrian chancellor and a former Italian prime minister — lobbied in the U.S. Manafort wrote in another memo [made public by Mueller's team](#) last month that he had "organized and leveraged" the visits of two Hapsburg group members to Washington. And disclosure reports retroactively filed by two Washington lobbying firms show that members of the Hapsburg group met with lawmakers in Washington around the same time.

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The documents filed by Manafort's lawyers on Thursday comprise hundreds of pages and offer the most detailed look yet into the lobbying campaign he orchestrated in Europe and Washington.

In a memo to Yanukovych dated Feb. 4, 2013, Manafort wrote that John Kerry's confirmation as secretary of state "is a positive development for us and will be a dramatic change from former Secretary Clinton."

The Feb. 4 memo isn't the only one in which Manafort appeared wary of Hillary Clinton, who had stepped down as secretary of state days earlier.

"It is important to understand that holdovers from the Clinton days and the US Embassy in Kyiv are not objective and are conspiring to identify options to get sanctions as a tool to pressure the Yanukovich Government," Manafort wrote in another memo to Yanukovych.

Manafort also described Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.), the incoming chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), the

incoming chairman of the Europe, Eurasia and emerging threats subcommittee, as good for Ukraine.

Manafort was more pessimistic about Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), the new chairman of another subcommittee, suggesting that he'd use his position to raise the issue of Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Ukrainian prime minister and Yanukovich's political rival. Yanukovich's government imprisoned Tymoshenko on what were widely condemned at the time as politically-motivated charges.

"It is highly likely that Smith uses this subcommittee as a vehicle to hold hearings on [Tymoshenko's] situation and possibly promote legislation," the memo reads.

Smith had previously introduced a bill to encourage free and fair Ukrainian elections. Lobbyists hired by Manafort and Gates had [lobbied against bills](#) in 2012 condemning Yanukovich's imprisonment of Tymoshenko.

Some of the documents are more cryptic.

One document, dated Jan. 15, 2013, lists four consultants in the U.S.: "Podesta/Devine/Weber/ Barry Jackson."

The lobbyists Tony Podesta of the Podesta Group and Vin Weber of Mercury and the consultant Tad Devine have all confirmed that they worked with Manafort and Gates. But Jackson, a former chief of staff to one-time House Speaker John Boehner, has not been tied to Manafort.

Jackson said he had no idea why his name was there.

"I have done no work with or for Paul Manafort nor on behalf of the Yanukovich regime and know of no reason why my name shows up in a document," Jackson wrote in an email to POLITICO on Thursday evening.

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