

Manafort intended for polling data to go to 2 Ukrainian oligarchs who owed him millions

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(CNN) — Semyi Lyovochkin and Rinat Akhmetov, two Ukrainian oligarchs who had paid Paul Manafort for years for his political work in their country, were the intended recipients of the American polling data that Manafort shared with Konstantin Kilimnik during the 2016 presidential campaign, a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

Special counsel Robert Mueller's team has been circling Lyovochkin and Akhmetov's dealings with Manafort for a while, as they were both key, generous backers of Manafort's Ukrainian lobbying work, prosecutors said at Manafort's financial fraud trial last summer.

The Justice Department initially asked Mueller to look into the pro-Russian Ukrainians' ties to Manafort, a former Trump campaign chairman, because of how they may relate to other allegations of Russian coordination with the Trump campaign.

The sharing of the polling data with Kilimnik [was revealed this week](#), despite being redacted in a court filing, due to a formatting error.

Manafort earned millions from his Ukrainian political work over several years. That included wire transfers from Akhmetov and Lyovochkin through offshore bank accounts, prosecutors said at trial.

The revenue appeared to dry up by 2015. However, Manafort wrote in one August 2016 email to his accountant that he expected a payment of \$2.4 million in November 2016 for work he did in Ukraine, according to trial documents.

A spokesman for Manafort confirmed Wednesday that Manafort expected to receive the \$2.4 million in income from his Ukrainian political backers, including Lyovochkin and Akhmetov. But the money was meant to reimburse old debts that predated the Trump campaign, spokesman Jason Maloni added, and it was not a quid pro quo for the polling data.

Still, the developments of Manafort's court filing Tuesday and the assertions Wednesday about the oligarchs confirm that Manafort had an interest in pocketing cash from a foreign country while he led Donald Trump's campaign. [Previously, investigators noted the debts](#) between Manafort and foreign businessmen in their effort to obtain search warrants for the Russia investigation.

Akhmetov is one of the richest men in Ukraine and bankrolled the Party of Regions, a Ukrainian political party aligned with Moscow that Manafort worked to bolster. [Akhmetov reportedly introduced Manafort](#) to the party's leader, Viktor Yanukovich, and they embarked on a decade-long partnership that saw Yanukovich win the presidency and major victories at the polls. Manafort earned [\\$60 million for his work in Ukraine](#), and was convicted last year of financial fraud after hiding the money overseas to avoid paying US taxes.

Some of the money came from Akhmetov through wire transfers between hidden bank accounts in Cyprus, Manafort's deputy Rick Gates testified in court.

Another witness, testifying against Manafort under oath, said Manafort and Akhmetov "knew each other well."

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Lyovochkin was a senior official in Yanukovych's administration, and secretly funneled millions of dollars to Manafort for his political consulting, [according to testimony from Manafort's trial](#). Lyovochkin survived the 2014 revolution that ousted Yanukovych, rebranding himself an opposition leader in the Ukrainian Parliament. He was implicated by federal prosecutors [in a criminal scheme](#) to steer foreign money to Trump's inauguration committee, though he wasn't mentioned by name in any of the court filings.

CNN's Marshall Cohen contributed to this report.

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