

RUSSIA/UKRAINE: THE DEMISE OF TRUMP'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER PAUL MANAFORT

Summary

- Ex-Ukrainian President YANUKOVYCH confides directly to PUTIN that he authorised kick-back payments to MANAFORT, as alleged in western media. Assures Russian President however there is no documentary evidence/trail
- PUTIN and Russian leadership remain worried however and sceptical that YANUKOVYCH has fully covered the traces of these payments to TRUMP's former campaign manager
- Close associate of TRUMP explains reasoning behind MANAFORT's recent resignation. Ukraine revelations played part but others wanted MANAFORT out for various reasons, especially LEWANDOWSKI who remains influential

Detail

1. Speaking in late August 2016, in the immediate aftermath of Paul MANAFORT's resignation as campaign manager for US Republican presidential candidate Donald TRUMP, a well-placed Russian figure reported on a recent meeting between President PUTIN and ex-President YANUKOVYCH of Ukraine. This had been held in secret on 15 August near Volgograd, Russia and the western media revelations about MANAFORT and Ukraine had featured prominently on the agenda. YANUKOVYCH had confided in PUTIN that he did authorise and order substantial kick-back payments to MANAFORT as alleged but sought to reassure him that there was no documentary trail left behind which could provide clear evidence of this.
2. Given YANUKOVYCH's (unimpressive) record in covering up his own corrupt tracks in the past, PUTIN and others in the Russian leadership were sceptical about the ex-Ukrainian president's reassurances on this as relating to MANAFORT. They therefore still feared the scandal had legs, especially as MANAFORT had been commercially active in Ukraine right up to the time (in March 2016) when he joined TRUMP's campaign team. For them it therefore remained a point of potential political vulnerability and embarrassment.

3. Speaking separately, also in late August 2016, an American political figure associated with Donald TRUMP and his campaign outlined the reasons behind MANAFORT's recent demise. S/he said it was true that the Ukraine corruption revelations had played a part in this but also, several senior players close to TRUMP had wanted MANAFORT out, primarily to loosen his control on strategy and policy formulation. Of particular importance in this regard was MANAFORT's predecessor as campaign manager, Corey LEWANDOWSKI, who hated MANAFORT personally and remained close to TRUMP with whom he discussed the presidential campaign on a regular basis.

22 August 2016

Senior figure in the Trump campaign, who had previously worked as head of administration, reported speaking to TRUMP who advised on how TRUMP should deal with the revelations. He was not involved in pro-TRUMP and anti-Clinton operations.

Russians do have further 'kompromat' on CLINTON (e-mails) and considering disseminating it after Dana (regarding election) in late September. Presidential spokesman PETERS' comments to lead on this.

However, equally important is Kremlin decision to shift policy concerning its ability to deliver to US next ELECTION whatever what both presidential candidates' opposition to TRUMP. TRUMP viewed as a result in this respect.

Senior Russian diplomat withdrawn from Washington embassy on account of potential operations in US presidential election operations.

2016

1. Speaking in confidence to a trusted confidante in late September 2016, a senior member of the Russian Presidential Administration (PA) commented on the political fallout from recent western media revelations about Moscow's intervention in favour of Donald TRUMP and against Hillary CLINTON in the US presidential election. The PA official reported that the issue had become tactically sensitive and that President PUTIN had instructed his cabinet that Kremlin and government leaders should go further than public or semi-public statements.

2. Kremlin says the PA should coordinate its statements on the election. The PA official said that the PA had been instructed to coordinate its statements on the election. The PA official said that the PA had been instructed to coordinate its statements on the election. The PA official said that the PA had been instructed to coordinate its statements on the election.