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Texts Reveal More Russia Ties for Key Anti-Biden Witness

| 'SEE U IN MOSCOW' |

Tony Bobulinski, a former business partner of Hunter Biden, is expected to testify publicly on Wednesday.

Roger Sollenberger
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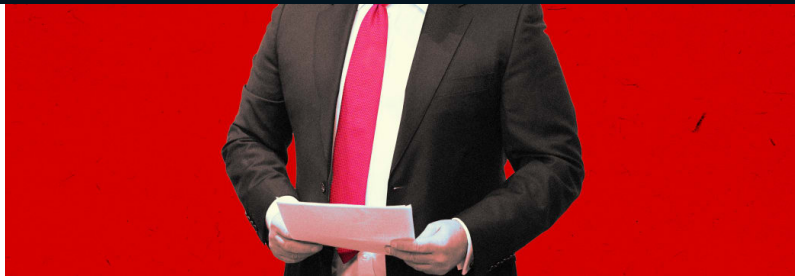


Photo Illustration by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/Getty

House Republican leaders behind the sputtering impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden scheduled a public hearing on Wednesday to iron out alleged “inconsistencies” in witness testimony. But they might want to start with the witness the GOP impeachment team has cited as their “most credible by far.”

Former Hunter Biden business associate Tony Bobulinski has provided testimony riddled with inconsistencies, including statements that contradict claims in the FBI’s write-up of their interview with him just ahead of the 2020 election.

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In closed-door testimony last month, Democrats on the House Oversight Committee pressed Bobulinski on those

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FBI agents who wrote up the interview, old business associates, former White House staffer Cassidy Hutchinson, and reporters at *The Wall Street Journal*.

Now, House Republicans have scheduled Bobulinski to testify publicly on Wednesday. [Hunter Biden](#) and another [former business partner](#) rejected offers to appear, leaving Bobulinski as the sole in-person witness. (One other GOP witness—former Biden associate Jason Galanis—will join remotely from federal prison, where he is serving a 14-year sentence for [defrauding a Native American tribe](#).)

This means that Bobulinski’s prior statements will be on the menu again for the Democrats. And not all of his inconsistencies can be chalked up to third-party error.



Hunter Biden, after a closed-door deposition before the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability on Feb. 28.

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oligarch behind state-controlled energy company Rosneft—appears far more close and complex than he has suggested, including in his House testimony.

Bobulinski was a partner with Hunter Biden and a small circle of other associates in a proposed 2017 investment deal involving their startup entity, called “SinoHawk,” and privately owned Chinese energy firm CEFC. In 2020, Bobulinski went public with claims that the finances involved not just Hunter Biden, but his father Joe Biden, who was out of office at the time of the negotiations.

Republicans have pointed to Bobulinski’s claims as evidence of potential wrongdoing, and his allegations have fueled unproven but widespread speculation about a bribery scandal—even though many of these claims have been debunked, and years of GOP investigations have turned up no evidence of impeachable offenses.

But as the inquiry has unspooled the details surrounding the proposal, Bobulinski’s own connections to Russia have come into clearer focus.

In 2017, while SinoHawk pursued its deal with CEFC—securing an investment of \$5 million—CEFC was simultaneously chasing an

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energy conglomerate whose founder, Viktor Vekselberg, had close ties to Bobulinski, The Daily Beast previously reported.



Viktor Vekselberg and Vladimir Putin in 2019.

📷 Sergei Ilnitsky/AFP via Getty

The CEFC-Rosneft negotiations created friction between Bobulinski and Hunter Biden, the text messages show, stemming from Hunter Biden’s aversion to dealing with the sanctioned Russian company. That led to the eventual dissolution of SinoHawk, though CEFC’s investment in Rosneft never came to fruition.

Bobulinski has claimed, including in his testimony last month, that he first learned of the potential CEFC-Rosneft deal from press reports in July 2017, emphasizing that the proposal was never officially recognized until September. He also told FBI agents and House investigators that he grew deeply concerned when he learned about the

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But WhatsApp [messages](#)—compiled by a nonprofit run by outspoken Hunter Biden opponent and former Donald Trump White House staffer Garrett Ziegler, and confirmed as authentic to The Daily Beast by a representative for Bobulinski—show that Bobulinski had been in a position to know much earlier.

According to those messages, Bobulinski had been physically in Moscow for business discussions involving CEFC’s executive director one month earlier.

“Can you please get confirmation of itinerary of Director Z trip to Russia,” Bobulinski asked a CEFC associate in a May 5 message, referring to CEFC executive director Jian Jun Zang.

“The director is still on the plane, so I have not got any update on the time table in Ru,” the associate replied, adding that CEFC would procure a visa for Bobulinski’s own travel to Russia. “Regarding the Visa, CEFC will issue a letter of invitation to you, plz send me [your] passport copy, a position in a certain company (which you would like the officer to know).”

When the associate clarified that Zang would be in Russia from June 4

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already setup? Is there anything we can help with?” Bobulinski asked, according to the messages. (Bobulinski made a similar inquests in an earlier message, writing, “We would like to be helpful to the Director and make sure his trip is great, can you please confirm his hotel is all settled and which hotel he is staying.”)

GOP’s Star Witness in Biden Probe Has Russian Oligarch Ties



| BOB-N-WEAVE |

William Bredderman,
Roger Sollenberger

In a separate WhatsApp exchange with Bobulinski days later, another SinoHawk partner mentions the upcoming Russia trip.

“[Z]ang wants to organize with me in Bucharest. I would like to do before Moscow or straight after,” the associate, James Gilliar, allegedly wrote, with Bobulinski allegedly replying, “Ok.” (Gilliar is also the person who sent Bobulinski a link to the public report about the CEFC-Rosneft deal, in July 2017.)

In another message from early June, Bobulinski told Gilliar, “see u in

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conversation before you try to
Moscow.”

Bobulinski later stated in the messages
that he was personally in Moscow in
early June.

“Chairman Ye coming to moscow this
trip?” Bobulinski asked a CEFC
representative in a June 7 message,
referencing another CEFC official.

The representative answered that Ye
“might come to Moscow in several days
but it’s not confirmed yet.” Bobulinski
then replied that he would have stayed
in Moscow longer, according to the
messages.

“OK we would have stayed to spend
time with him and the Director if we
had known, it isn’t 100% confirmed yet
though,” he wrote.



Tony Bobulinski speaks to journalists ahead of a debate
between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in 2020.

Tom Brenner/Reuters

While all SinoHawk partners appear to
agree that CEFC’s involvement with

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In his 2020 FBI interview, Bobulinski told agents that he'd first grown "concerned" about Hunter Biden's participation in the CEFC-Sinohawk negotiations "after learning of CEFC's involvement in Rosneft," news that first came out on Independence Day in 2017. (A WhatsApp message shows Bobulinski receiving this information that day, from Gilliar.)

According to Bobulinski's account, he thought it was strange that CEFC could manage a \$9 billion purchase while slow-rolling its much smaller \$5 million investment in Sinohawk. Group WhatsApp messages included in House impeachment releases show that Rosneft and Bobulinski's oligarch ties gave rise to disputes between Hunter Biden and Bobulinski, The Daily Beast previously reported.

The circumstances surrounding the collapse of the deal, Bobulinski has said, are what led him to come forward in the first place. He has claimed that he first learned Hunter Biden cut him out of the CEFC deal when he read a Senate report released in late 2020, telling the FBI that in retrospect, the Rosneft involvement "didn't add up" to him.

But WhatsApp messages show that Hunter Biden also bristled at the

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When Bobulinski first agreed to what became the SinoHawk deal—in spring 2016—he did not know he was going into business with Hunter Biden, but a “prominent American family;” impeachment records show he first became aware of Hunter Biden’s role in February 2017. And in the context of 2017, Bobulinski’s Russia connections were nuclear.

In 2014, while Joe Biden was vice president, the U.S. government sanctioned Rosneft in response to Russia’s first unlawful incursion into Ukraine. Additionally, Moscow had just [interfered in the 2016 election on Trump’s behalf](#)—with Rosneft’s role in Christopher Steele’s dossier [garnering intense speculation](#)—and Hunter Biden was wary of anything involving the Russian government. Hunter Biden [aired these frustrations in text messages](#) released by House Republicans, and WhatsApp messages between him and Bobulinski show the two men in fierce arguments months before the SinoHawk project fell apart.

On May 19, 2017, Hunter Biden and Bobulinski had a confrontation over the SinoHawk deal. WhatsApp messages show Biden invoking Bobulinski’s ties to Vekselberg, blasting him as

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how much money you’ve made what teams you were captain of or how many soulless oligarchs you call friend,” Hunter Biden wrote. “Money doesn’t interest me winning is ephemeral and fleeting and I have no interest spending my days on a super yacht measuring my dick with the people on the super yacht next to me.”

Biden continued, “I care about one thing. My family. And your demands make me uncomfortable and you’re [sic] insults remind me of the shit the captain of the lacrosse team said to me in college about my dad right before I broke his fucking jaw. So you’re [sic] choice Tony act like a child and take all your millions of marbles home and throw them at me from afar or sit down like men do and have a discussion face to face. One request though stop the 5th grade group text insults—Jesus my daughters texts are more cogent and mature.”

Bobulinski replied that he and “all the partners around the table” were “trying to protect u and your family” [sic]. Bobulinski also said that if Hunter Biden ever brought the deal up to his father, he’d likely be waved off.

“[A]nd to add to it, if you are so worried about your family, you wouldn’t be doing this because as u said, all of your

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referencing Hunter Biden's uncle, James Biden, who was also involved in SinoHawk.

The deal, of course, fell through. Instead, a separate entity that Hunter Biden co-founded with Chinese investors received \$5 million from a CEFC affiliate in August 2017. That company paid Hunter Biden \$500,000 up-front, followed by monthly consulting fees of \$100,000—payments that the GOP has cast in misleading terms.

Last week, CNN reported that the impeachment inquiry has stalled amid a series of embarrassing and escalating setbacks. While the most damaging blow came in the form of the indictment of an FBI informant last month for lying to his handlers, CNN also reported that Biden's recent closed-door testimony also impressed Republicans, leaving Oversight chair Rep. Jamie Comer (R-KY) Comer "on his own island."

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been scheduled, and Republicans, who control the House, don't have enough votes to impeach Joe Biden, CNN reported. There's no partisan consensus on an exit strategy, either, and while Comer has advocated for criminal referrals, House Judiciary Chair Jim Jordan and House Speaker Mike Johnson are less enthusiastic, according to CNN.

Bobulinski didn't return The Daily Beast's comment request, and Hunter Biden's legal team declined to comment. In response to questions, an Oversight Committee spokesperson provided a statement challenging Hunter Biden to appear for a public hearing.

"Tony Bobulinski is willing to appear before the Oversight Committee in public to answer questions about his previous testimony and anything else members want to ask him," the statement said. "If Hunter Biden was so confident in his previous testimony, he'd do the same. But it appears Hunter Biden is afraid to testify alongside his former business associates."

Hunter Biden shot down the GOP's invitation to join Bobulinski at Wednesday's upcoming hearing, with his attorney Abbe Lowell dismissing the proceedings as a "carnival side show."

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undercut their central allegations—also rejected the invitation to testify this week, citing a “patently unreasonable” request.

In last month’s closed-door interview, House Democrats peppered Bobulinski with questions seeking to highlight and dismantle his shifting narratives. Their inquiries zeroed in on several factual discrepancies, chiefly concerning the details surrounding Bobulinski’s presence at a 2017 business meeting in Miami, as noted in the FBI interview. Bobulinski’s written testimony admits that he did not attend the meeting, blaming the half-dozen FBI agents in the interview for a “single note-taking error.”

But as Democrats pressed Bobulinski, that “single note-taking error” morphed into a broader claim, about “numerous statements in [the FBI notes] that are incorrect.” The testimony transcript illustrates a series of contentious exchanges, with Democrats expressing open skepticism that the inconsistencies were merely the fault of FBI agents taking bad notes, and reprimanding Bobulinski for what Democrats said was a combative and “disrespectful” tone.

Those disputed claims include the FBI’s notes that Bobulinski told them he had

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note that Bobulinski called “a lie.” The inconsistencies also include the timeline of when Bobulinski first learned of the Chinese company involved with the business deals, with Bobulinski telling Democrats that the FBI’s notes about that timeline were also “incorrect.”



Attendees of a House Oversight and Accountability Committee hearing last fall made their views clear.

📷 Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

A third point of contention was whether Bobulinski had visited the White House the day before his FBI interview. (The write-up notes that Bobulinski was tested for COVID specifically because of a White House visit the prior day.) In response, Bobulinski—flanked by Donald Trump’s 2020 campaign lawyer Stefan Passantino—told Rep. Dan Goldman (D-NY) that the COVID test was for an event in Nashville, Tennessee, adding that he has “never” visited the White House and slamming the detail as a “big, clear mistake” by

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on the FBI’s part beggared belief among Bobulinski’s Democratic interrogators. The accuracy is paramount, because Bobulinski’s FBI interview has for years been held up by Hunter Biden’s critics as official documentation for the bombshell claim that Hunter Biden had arranged for a 10 percent cut for “the big guy,” Joe Biden—an allegation that has since been discredited. (Bobulinski sat for that 2020 FBI interview voluntarily, but refused to provide his electronic devices for imaging.)

After Bobulinski implicated Joe Biden directly in the deal, Gilliar—a SinoHawk partner—told *The Wall Street Journal*, “I would like to clear up any speculation that former Vice President Biden was involved with the 2017 discussions about our potential business structure. I am unaware of any involvement at any time of the former vice president. The activity in question never delivered any project revenue.”

Separately in the hearing, Bobulinski also attacked Cassidy Hutchinson’s claims about him in her recent memoir. Hutchinson wrote that she saw Bobulinski meet with former Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows while wearing a ski mask at an October 2020 campaign event, where Meadows gave Bobulinski an envelope of some kind.

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mask.

In response, [Hutchinson](#) released what she said was a photo from the event showing Meadows next to Bobulinski in a black ski mask. Days later, Bobulinski [sued Hutchinson](#) for defamation.

When the testimony was over, House Oversight minority leader Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) released a [statement](#) characterizing the hearing as “farcical” and rebutting many of Bobulinski’s claims and explanations. In November, Hunter Biden’s legal team filed a [criminal referral](#) asking the Justice Department to investigate Bobulinski for potentially lying to federal agents in his 2020 interview.

Republicans, however, defended their witness. In interviews after the hearing, [Comer](#) threw his lot in with Bobulinski.

“Tony Bobulinski’s the one credible guy in the Biden orbit,” Comer told Newsmax in one [interview](#). “I will admit with Jamie Raskin that there are a lot of people involved with the Bidens that weren’t credible. That’s a reflection on the Bidens, not me. Tony Bobulinski’s the one good guy, the one honest guy, the one credible guy, and he did a great job in the transcribed interview yesterday.”

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The prosecutor in the case over [Donald Trump](#)'s alleged mishandling of classified documents criticized a request from the judge overseeing the proceedings, claiming that it's based on a "fundamentally flawed legal premise."

In a court filing Tuesday, Justice Department Special Counsel [Jack Smith](#) said U.S. District Court Judge Aileen Cannon's orders risked putting the case in jeopardy before the trial even begins. Smith and his team also called on the court to "promptly" make its interpretation of a key issue clear and signaled that they might file an appeal to dispute the judge's decisions

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At issue is an unusual order Cannon made last month in which she asked both the prosecution and defense teams to file two versions of draft instructions for the jury. The order—which Cannon made even though a trial date has not yet been set—asked the legal teams to base the instructions on two possible scenarios.

In one scenario, Cannon asked the attorneys to base instructions on the assumption that presidents have the right to declare documents personal rather than official at the end of their time in office by using the Presidential Records Act. This is the argument that Trump’s defense is arguing in the case. In the other scenario, the jury would be allowed to review records and decide which of the documents Trump allegedly retained unlawfully are “personal” and which are “presidential.”

Trump has been charged with mishandling 32 classified documents under the Espionage Act—the former

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no role in jury instructions at all.

“Both scenarios rest on an unstated and fundamentally flawed legal premise—namely, that the Presidential Records Act (‘PRA’), and in particular its distinction between ‘personal’ and ‘Presidential’ records [...] determines whether a former President is ‘authorized,’ under the Espionage Act [...] to possess highly classified documents and store them in an unsecure facility,” the special counsel’s team wrote.

Instructions based on that “wrong” legal premise “would distort the trial,” the prosecution added. It also said if Cannon does permit a jury instruction according to the Trump team’s argument that a president has the right to declare any record personal at the end of their term, regardless of its classification or where it’s stored, then “the Government must be provided with an opportunity to seek prompt appellate review.”

Smith’s team reiterated that “both of the Court’s scenarios are fundamentally flawed and any jury instructions that reflect those scenarios would be error,” but nevertheless added in the filing “jury instructions for each of these two legally erroneous scenarios.”

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but a later date is now more likely amid ongoing disputes brought by both sides. Trump faces three other criminal cases as he campaigns for president.

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