

ENERGY

# John Podesta Was Behind Biden's Decision To Pause Natural Gas Exports. His Lobbyist Brother Stands To Benefit.

Tony Podesta represents foreign companies involved in the natural gas industry

L-R: John and Tony Podesta (AP)

Alana Goodman  
February 15, 2024


Biden administration climate envoy John Podesta was behind the administration's decision to pause U.S. liquefied natural gas exports. His brother Tony Podesta could reap the benefits as a longtime lobbyist for foreign Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) companies—including one founded by a Russian energy oligarch.

---

FreeBeacon

[Read more](#)

Sexual Violence Prevention Association Slams Dem Rep Eric Sorensen Over Rape Joke



---

John Podesta played a major role in ushering in the new LNG policy, sources told the *Washington Free Beacon*, a move that is seen as a political giveaway to green energy activists in the Democratic Party base. Deep-pocketed left-leaning donors, including charities funded by the Rockefeller brothers and Michael Bloomberg, have poured millions of dollars into environmental groups that lobbied to cut off new LNG permit approvals, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

But the decision could also boost current and former clients of Podesta's brother, Washington power-lobbyist Tony Podesta, who has long represented foreign companies involved in the LNG industry.

Over the past decade, Tony Podesta's client roster has included LNG group Golden Pass, which is co-owned by the state-run QatarEnergy, and the Bulgarian company Protos Energy, which reportedly hired him to work on LNG-related issues.

Since 2022, Tony Podesta's firm has raked in over \$1 million from Gemcorp, an investment fund that was barred from working on a Bulgarian LNG and energy development project due to the company's links to Russia.

Tony Podesta's lobbying work, and its potential overlap with his brother's role in the Biden administration, has come under scrutiny in the past. In 2021, House lawmakers questioned whether Tony Podesta's work for the Chinese telecom company Huawei would have an influence on the Biden administration's China policy.

The lobbyist's work in the LNG industry is raising similar questions, according to critics.

"It's no secret that John Podesta is the person behind this moratorium," one energy industry insider told the *Free Beacon*. "Congress should take a very hard look at the fact that his own brother stands to financially benefit from a restriction of U.S. LNG on the global market, whether it be from his past work with the Qataris or current reported work with Russian-backed entities with interest in LNG."

"Less U.S. LNG on the global market will ensure Qatar and Russia receive hundreds of billions of dollars that would otherwise go to the U.S."

Energy industry insiders have also warned that the administration's decision to pause on LNG export permits will boost America's foreign energy rivals, including Qatar and Russia. The countries are two of the world's largest LNG exporters next to the United States.

Mike Sommers, CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, called the LNG pause a "win for Russia and a loss for American allies, U.S. jobs, and global climate progress."

Tony Podesta has represented Gemcorp since 2022. But the investment group's Russian roots have made it a controversial player in the energy industry.

In April 2022, the Bulgarian government agreed to co-finance Gemcorp's energy modernization projects in the country, including an "Interconnector Greece Bulgaria (QGB) project for LNG," according to a copy of the [memorandum](#). But the plan drew public backlash after media outlets reported on Gemcorp's links to Russia.

Gemcorp's founder and chairman is Atanas Bostandjiev, the former London head of Russian state-owned bank VTB Capital. The bank was placed under international sanctions in 2022.

Gemcorp was founded with \$250 million in seed money from Russian energy tycoon Albert Avdolyan and telecom mogul Serguei Adoniev, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) in 2022. The funding reportedly came from their sale of a company connected to Rostec, the sanctioned Russian defense conglomerate.

Adoniev, a close ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin, was sanctioned by the U.S. government last year.

Both Avdolyan and Gemcorp were reportedly involved in Russia's LNG industry. Gemcorp helped finance a loan to an LNG project in eastern Russia, [according](#) to the *Financial Times*. Avdolyan [invested](#) in a Russian LNG export terminal near China's border in 2020.

Gemcorp was also involved in exporting Russian grain, and it signed an agreement with Moscow-controlled Sberbank to "support Russian exports, technological,

agricultural, and some equipment that is so necessary for the African continent" in 2019, according to a [statement](#) from Bostandjiev at the time.

Avdolyan divested from Gemcorp in 2020, and the company has sought to distance itself from Russia since the start of the war in Ukraine. Gemcorp's website says it was initially "backed by two Russian individuals who have never been subject to sanctions" but does "not now have any Russian investors or clients."

But its attempts to move away from Moscow failed to mollify critics in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarian government revoked its deal with Gemcorp shortly after it was signed in 2022. Bulgarian politician Desislava Trifonova [claimed](#) the energy agreement with Gemcorp was in the "service of the Russian state" and would have turned the government energy sector into "Russian property."

Prior to his work with Gemcorp, Podesta represented Protos Energy from 2021 to 2022. The company's owner Georgi Samuilov [told](#) the Bureau for Investigative Reporting and Data that he hired Podesta because the company has an "interest" in the U.S. LNG market.

---

---

Between 2013 and 2018, Tony Podesta also lobbied for Golden Pass, a joint venture of QatarEnergy and ExxonMobil, according to lobbying disclosure records.

Tony Podesta, the White House, and Gemcorp did not respond to requests for comment.

**Published under:** [Biden Administration](#) , [Energy](#) , [foreign agents](#) , [John Podesta](#) , [Podesta Group](#) , [Russia](#)

ENERGY

## RELATED POSTS

### NATIONAL SECURITY

#### **In a War Against China, the US Runs Out of Missiles in a Matter of Weeks, House Committee Finds**

Adam Kredo  
December 9, 2024

---

### CULTURE

#### **From Nicholas II to Trump I?**

Kevin J. McNamara  
December 8, 2024

## TOP HITS

### NATIONAL SECURITY

#### **This Chinese Drone Company Found a Workaround to Congress's Ban on Doing Business in the US—Before the Ban Is Even Passed**

Andrew Kerr  
December 7, 2024