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Russian Lawyer Tells State TV She Met Trump Jr. to Ask for 'Help'

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Natalya Veselnitskaya **Screenshot / Vesti.ru**

The Russian lawyer who reportedly met with Donald Trump Jr. to offer him compromising material on Hillary Clinton, told state television she wanted to "ask him for help."

"It was a private meeting," Natalya Veselnitskaya told the Rossia-24 channel's Vesti news program. "I asked for help. Help to spread a story that I had come across in my professional capacity."

Veselnitskaya said she met with Trump Jr. in June 2016 on behalf of her client Russian businessman Denis Katsyv, who was accused of money laundering in the U.S. in connection with the Magnitsky Act.

The law was signed by President Obama in late 2012, and introduced the first post-Soviet sanctions against Russia, punishing individuals who were allegedly involved in the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, and targeting officials involved in corruption.

Veselnitskaya told the presenter she wanted to speak to Trump Jr. to tell him about William Browder, Magnitsky's employer. Browder was the co-founder and head of Hermitage Capital, which was a leading foreign investor in Russia until 2006 when it was targeted by corporate raiders with government ties.

After Magnitsky died under suspicious circumstances in a Moscow prison, Browder successfully lobbied for Washington to pass the Magnitsky Act.

Veselnitskaya accused Browder of a “financial scam" and her meeting with Trump Jr. as "innocent."

“[The request to Trump Jr.] was a completely normal request to everyone who could provide any kind of support in U.S. Congress, so that the Congressmen would know what really happened in our country with Browder.”

“As I’ve said before, [the meeting] had nothing to do with [Trump’s] rivals or the presidential elections,” Veselnitskaya told the program. “That never happened, that’s not true.”

Her story contradicts reports by The New York Times that Trump Jr. had agreed to meet with Veselnitskaya after she offered him compromising material on his political rival Hillary Clinton ahead of the U.S. election.

Trump initially denied the account, saying he had met Veselnitskaya to talk about a Russian ban on adoptions by American families.

When probed, he admitted that such an offer had been made but dismissed Veselnitskaya’s information as not “meaningful,” saying it “made no sense.”

Veselnitskaya’s comments to Russian TV came the same day that the Wall Street Journal reported that Special Counsel Robert Mueller had called for a grand jury to look into allegations of possible Russian interference in the U.S. presidential elections.

Veselnitskaya’s meeting with Trump Jr. will be a major focus, the newspaper reported.

In the interview, Veselnitskaya said she had not once been invited to U.S. Congress hearings to tell her story, calling the investigations politically motivated.

“They don’t want the truth there at the moment, they need an enemy,” she said.

“Some because they are looking to undermine Trump, some because they to fuel the conflict with Russia.”

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