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By [Anita Kumar](#)

Trump calls Ukraine corrupt. He still wanted to build a resort there.

Members of Congress apparently unaware of Trump Organization's prior ties to country.

Трам називає Україну корумпованою. Він все-таки хотів там побудувати курорт.

Члени Конгресу, очевидно, не знають про попередні зв'язки Організації Трампа з Україною.

У 2006 році Дональд Трамп-молодший та Іванка Трамп вирушили в Україну, щоб зустрітися з урядовцями щодо будівництва в країні багатомільйонного готелю та майданчика для гольфу. Трампи збирались спорудити розкішні курорти у всіх колишніх республіках Радянського Союзу, і Україна здавалася перспективним місцем. Але це означало орієнтуватися на краєвид, який довго боровся з корупцією. Організація Трампа залучила проектанта Дмитра Буряка та авантюриста Фелікса Сатера, які обоє мали бізнес-інтереси в Росії, – пише авторка публікації. Тепер, через десять років після того, як зусилля його компанії в Україні не увінчалися успіхом, президент Д. Трамп стверджує, що це син його політичного суперника Джо Байдена, а не він, хотів отримати вигоду з того, що він називає "дуже корумпованою" Україною. Критики президента заявляють, що це вже знайоме протиріччя Д. Трампа, яке викликає подальші сумніви щодо твердження президента, що він просто хотів викоринити корупцію, коли тиснув на українських чиновників розслідувати справи на кандидата у президенти США - відкриття, яке викликало розслідування про імпичмент у Палаті представників.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-ukraine-corruption-resort/>



Kyiv, Ukraine | Sean Gallup/Getty Images

In 2006, Donald Trump Jr. and Ivanka Trump traveled to Ukraine to meet with government officials about building a multimillion dollar hotel and golf course in the country. Two years later, Trump Jr. was back to meet with developers.

The Trumps were looking to erect luxury resorts across the former Soviet republics, and Ukraine seemed like a promising location. But doing so meant navigating a landscape that had long struggled with corruption. And as part of its overtures, the Trump Organization engaged developers Dmitry Buriak and felon Felix Sater, both of whom have had business interests in Russia.

Now, a decade after his company's efforts floundered, President Donald Trump is arguing that it's the son of his political rival Joe Biden, not him, who wanted to benefit from what he calls a "very corrupt" Ukraine.

The president's critics say it's a now-familiar Trumpian contradiction, one that raises further doubts about the president's claim he merely wanted to root out corruption when he pressured Ukrainian officials to investigate the Bidens — a revelation that [sparked](#) a House impeachment inquiry.

There are no accusations that the Trump Organization crossed any legal lines with its early-2000s effort in Ukraine — much of which has not been previously reported in American media. But the overtures offer another example of the complications of a businessman-turned-president making foreign policy decisions in places where he has had — or tried to have — significant [financial interests](#). Trump has faced similar scrutiny in both countries where he has developments, including Turkey, India and the Philippines, and those where he tried and failed, such as Russia.

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House and Senate committees appear to be unaware of the Trump Organization's prior Ukraine connections, according to more than half a dozen lawmakers and staffers. The new details are based on court documents, government emails obtained by the conservative group Judicial Watch and foreign media reports, some of which were translated.

"President Trump's foreign policy decisions call into serious question whether he's looking out for the American people or his own wallet," said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, (D-Wash.), a member of the House Judiciary Committee, which is jointly conducting the House's impeachment inquiry.

The Trump Organization did not respond to a request for comment, but the White House said any past Ukrainian business dealings have nothing to do with Trump's foreign policy.

"As he announced in January 2017, President Donald Trump is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the Trump Organization, and he does not take any action that benefits him personally," White House spokesman Judd Deere said. "While House Democrats continue to spread false rumors in complete denial that the president was a successful businessman for decades, President Trump continues to keep his promises to the American people."



Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy at the UN General Assembly in September 2019 | Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images

House Democrats launched their [impeachment investigation](#) after learning Trump asked the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to look into whether Biden as vice president helped protect his son from an investigation into his work for Burisma, a Ukrainian natural gas company.

Trump has repeatedly [defended](#) his pressure campaign, saying it was part of a broader effort to eradicate corruption in Ukraine. He and his family have continued to accuse Hunter Biden of trading on his father's famous name. "I wish my name was Hunter Biden," Trump Jr. said recently on Fox News. "I could go abroad and make millions off my father's presidency. I'd be a really rich guy."

After hearing Trump tried to open a resort in Ukraine, Biden's campaign called on Trump to release information about the efforts.

"This revelation is the latest reminder that every single day, Donald Trump is breaking his promise to the American people to release his tax returns and be transparent about for whom he really works," Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates said.

After winning the presidency, Trump ignored calls to fully separate himself from the Trump Organization, which is composed of more than 500 businesses but is not required to publicly release financial data. The president still owns his business but has placed his holdings in a trust designed to hold assets for his benefit. He can receive money from the trust at any time without the public's knowledge. In the 1990s and 2000s, Trump had his sights set on countries, including Ukraine, in the former Soviet Union, which were opening to foreign investment for the first time.

Trump has repeatedly defended his pressure campaign, saying it was part of a broader effort to eradicate corruption in Ukraine.

Trump's company considered at least two developments in Ukraine — a hotel and golf course in Kyiv and a hotel and yacht club in the seaside city of [Yalta](#), which is now part of the Russian-annexed area of Crimea. The Ukrainian government granted the organization the right to build properties in both cities, according to news reports. It's unclear why neither project got off the ground.

Yevhen Chervonenko, then the Ukraine minister of transportation, was quoted in 2005 as saying Trump's expected financial contribution was estimated to be \$500 million.

But other reports indicate the Trump Organization planned to license its name and receive royalties from any Ukraine project instead of owning the properties, a model it follows in many locations around the globe.



Ivanka Trump (left) and Donald Trump Jr. traveled to Ukraine in 2006 to meet with government officials about building a multi-million dollar hotel and golf course | Saul Loeb/Getty Images
Many in the country welcomed the Trump family's attention.

“Experts say that the interest of people like Donald Trump in the Ukrainian market is a great advantage for our country,” [Delo.ua](#), a Ukrainian business website wrote in a 2008 article exploring the benefits of a Trump development. “This is a kind of official recognition of world financial institutions that Ukrainian real estate deserves serious funding.”

The Trump Organization worked with Buriak, whose company, DeVision, bills itself as one of the largest real estate businesses in Ukraine. Buriak also served as [vice president](#) at DeVision’s parent company, [Petrochemical Holding](#), whose managing director was [convicted](#) in 2002 of abuse of power related to his work at the Russian government-owned energy giant Gazprom.

Separately, Lithuanian law enforcement [investigated](#) whether Buriak and another company partly owned by Petrochemical Holding funneled money from Russian special services to Lithuania’s ruling Labor Party in the 2000s. And a recent [investigation](#) by Lithuania’s legislative body into political and electoral interference suggested Petrochemical Holding and Buriak were both “posing a threat to the interests of Lithuania.”

"Experts say that the interest of people like Donald Trump in the Ukrainian market is a great advantage for our country." — *Delo.ua, a Ukrainian business website, in 2008*

The Trump organization also worked with Sater, who pleaded guilty in 1998 to helping run a \$40 million stock-fraud scheme that involved organized crime associates, according to prosecutors.

Sater later emerged during the 2016 U.S. presidential election as a go-between for Trump’s efforts to construct a Trump Tower in Moscow, making him a featured player in special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russia election interference.

For the potential Ukraine project, the Russian-born Sater worked with Tefvik Arif, chairman of Bayrock Group, headquartered in Trump Tower in New York.

“I remember we were in Yalta. I remember we were looking at opportunities,” Sater said in a [2008 deposition](#). “I remember speaking to the Trump Organization about that opportunity. I even remember the specific opportunity, and we discussed it with them. . . . It didn’t get to the finish line.”

In court documents, Trump stated Bayrock Group was involved in projects in Yalta, as well as Phoenix, Moscow, Istanbul, and Warsaw, Poland.

Buriak, Sater and Sater’s attorney, Robert Wolf, didn’t respond to requests for comment.

The Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. | Alex Wroblewski/Getty Images

Trump's children also directly engaged Ukrainian officials.

In February 2006, Trump Jr. and Ivanka Trump visited Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, and met with Viktor Tkachuk, an adviser to then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, and Andrey Zaika of Ukrainian Construction Consortium, a construction company, according to several foreign news reports. In 2008, Trump Jr. returned to meet with developers at DeVision, according to foreign news reports and emails. Some details of the meetings were revealed in an email the Justice Department released to Judicial Watch, a conservative group known for making public records requests.

"Donald Jr. met with DeVision in Kyiv in June 2008 and in NYC; discussed Euro Park hotel project and golf club," read a December 2016 [email](#) from senior DOJ official Bruce Ohr, referencing a possible name for the Ukraine property. Judicial Watch requested Ohr's records in an attempt to uncover information related to Republican accusations that Ohr helped write a Democratic-funded dossier designed to hurt Trump.

"I remember speaking to the Trump Organization about that opportunity [in Yalta] ... It didn't get to the finish line." — developer *Felix Sater in a 2008 deposition*

Buriak — the [chairman](#) of DeVision — [said](#) at the time that Trump Jr. favored two projects: the Euro Park hotel in Kyiv, which was worth \$60 million, and a golf club in Koncha-Zaspa, an area in the southern part of the city.

But the Trump Organization's efforts in Ukraine faded. In fact, the company's broader push in the former Soviet Union never resulted in any completed properties. Trump pulled out of a deal to develop a 47-story luxury tower in the Black Sea resort town of Batumi, Georgia. And a Trump high-rise in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, remains unfinished.

In the late 2000s, Trump sued journalist Timothy O'Brien after he said he lost out on deals in both Kyiv and Yalta after the publication of an unflattering book. The lawsuit was dismissed.

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.), who serves on the House Oversight Committee, which is investigating whether Trump is illegally profiting off the presidency, called the attempt to develop a resort in Ukraine “hypocritical,” given the president’s rhetoric about the Bidens. He said the situation reminded him of Trump’s unsuccessful project in Russia.

Trump did not disclose the ongoing Trump Tower Moscow negotiations while he was running for president, repeatedly claiming he had “nothing to do with Russia.” But his former attorney and fixer Michael Cohen is serving a three-year prison sentence in part for lying to Congress about the timing of those negotiations.