



Russian billionaires who shopped for US property with Hunter Biden and dined with Joe dodge sanctions

Description

Two Russian billionaires who have managed to dodge US sanctions over Moscow's year-old invasion of Ukraine went property shopping with Hunter Biden, dined with then-Vice President Joe Biden, and discussed "favours" they might swap, sources tell The Post.

New details of Joe and Hunter Biden's association with Yelena Baturina and Vladimir Yevtushenkov flesh out tantalizing clues from the first son's abandoned laptop. The sources spoke with The Post this week after the duo was yet again spared a fresh batch of sanctions announced by the Treasury Department Friday.

"I think it's very fishy," said one source who had firsthand knowledge of the business relationship between Hunter Biden and Yevtushenkov — who is sanctioned by the UK and Australia but not by the US.

"I think he should be sanctioned," Michael McFaul, a former US ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama, told The Post of Yevtushenkov — estimated by Forbes to be [worth \\$1.7 billion](#). "I don't understand why he has not been."

Yevtushenkov, whose Sistema business empire until recently included Russian rocket and radar-maker RTI and drone-maker Kronstadt, [admitted last year](#) he met with Hunter Biden for breakfast at the Ritz-Carlton in Manhattan on March 14, 2012 — but denied any further contact.

However, emails and calendar entries from Hunter's former laptop show that they were set to meet again on Jan. 27, 2013, for dinner at DC's Cafe Milano before looking at a commercial real estate development the next day near Dulles International Airport in northern Virginia.



According to sources, two Russian billionaires with connections to President Joe Biden and his son Hunter have managed to avoid being sanctioned.

“I asked [Yevtushenkov], ‘Why are you doing this?’ on the front end — before I understood that they were going to buy some real estate,” the source told The Post. “‘Why are you even doing this? Why would you be paying the son of the vice president to meet at a public restaurant in New York City?’

“He made it very clear to me that, you know ... ‘I think it would be good to have a good relationship with this guy ... maybe he can do a favor for us and we can do a favor for him,’” the source continued. “It was a complete quid pro quo that he was going in for.”

“I told him that’s not the way it works in America, [but] he basically laughed at me and told me I was so naïve,” the source recalled of Yevtushenkov, whose holdings also include Russia’s largest cellphone provider, MTS — which faced a long-running investigation into nearly \$1 billion in bribes paid to Uzbekistani officials between 2004 and 2012.

MTS, which was listed on the New York Stock Exchange before trading in its shares was suspended in July of last year, ultimately settled the case with the Trump Justice Department in 2019, agreeing to pay an [\\$850 million fine](#).



Emails from Hunter Biden's laptop show he has met with Vladimir Yevtushenkov and toured

a commercial real estate development in 2013.
Photo by Mikhail Svetlov/Getty Images

A different source, meanwhile, told The Post he vividly recalled Baturina and her husband, ex-Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, looking “like an odd couple” at a now-infamous, intimate dinner with Hunter and his father, the then-vice president.

It’s long been uncertain whether Baturina, estimated by Forbes to be worth \$1.4 billion, and Luzhkov actually attended the April 16, 2015 dinner at Cafe Milano — the same Georgetown restaurant where Hunter and Yevtushenkov set a date more than two years prior.

“They could have played themselves on ‘Saturday Night Live,’” said the source, who attended the dinner and was able to identify the couple in part because he met Luzhkov — who died in 2019 — on several other occasions. (Another source previously told The Post that a pair matching Baturina and Luzhkov’s general appearance was there.)

Luzhkov, who was Moscow’s mayor for 18 years until 2010, “looked a lot older” than Baturina — 27 years her husband’s junior — who “went overboard” on her appearance and ended up resembling Jennifer Coolidge’s comedic portrayal of an insecure heiress in HBO’s “The White Lotus,” the source recalled.

“It was an odd dinner because there was [then-Kazakhstani Prime Minister Karim] Massimov, Luzhkov and his wife, and it was not a big table and then there was somebody there from some food charity making a pitch for support,” they added. “I mean, it was, was — it was a little odd, the whole thing.”

In an email at the time, Hunter wrote that the meal would be “ostensibly” about his role as chairman of the World Food Program (WFP) USA.

His father, the sitting vice president, arrived at the dinner and stayed for about 40 minutes, the second source told The Post, even sitting down to eat and then posing for a photo with the Kazakhstani group.

The gathering also featured Vadym Pozharskyi, an executive at Ukrainian energy company Burisma, which paid Hunter up to \$1 million per year beginning in 2014 while his VP dad controlled the Obama administration’s Ukraine policy.



A source told The Post that Yelena Baturina and her husband ex-Moscow Mayor Yury

Luzhkov were seen having dinner with then-Vice President Biden and Hunter.

Photo by Mikhail Svetlov/Getty Images

[Pozharskyi emailed Hunter](#) the next day to thank him for “giving an opportunity to meet your father” — forming the basis of The Post’s first October 2020 bombshell from Hunter Biden’s laptop.

Joe Biden called the report a false “Russian plant” at the time and social media platforms Twitter and Facebook initially censored it.

Baturina would have been familiar with Hunter Biden, having met with him and his then-business partner Devon Archer for a drink in April 2014 at the Villa d’Este — a well-known haunt of Russian oligarchs overlooking Italy’s Lake Como. On the same trip, Hunter also met the Ukrainian-Russian oligarch owner of Burisma, Mykolai Zlochevsky.

Two months earlier, on Feb. 14, 2014, Baturina had wired \$3.5 million to a bank account held by Rosemont Seneca Thornton, the investment firm Hunter had co-founded.



Baturina met with Hunter Biden's former business partner Devon Archer for a drink in April 2014 at the Villa d'Este.
Alec Tabak

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who co-authored a September 2020 report by GOP-led Senate committees revealing the wire, told The Post: "It is clear that Hunter Biden's questionable business dealings with individuals from Russia and China have compromised President Biden and continue to raise conflicts of interest concerns."

"Our work on this matter remains ongoing, and we will continue to provide the American people with

transparency and evidence of the Bidens' extensive financial connections with foreign nationals with questionable backgrounds," Johnson added.

"It is extremely concerning that Biden-linked Russian nationals are avoiding sanctions. If this happened under a Republican White House, the mainstream media would be up in arms," added Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.). "This latest report is further proof of the deep level of corruption occurring with Hunter Biden and Biden Inc."



House Oversight Committee Chairman Rep. James Comer called the lack of sanctions on the Biden-connected oligarchs "alarming."

Anna Rose Layden/Bloomberg via Getty Images

“It’s alarming that Hunter Biden’s Russian oligarch pals are missing from the Treasury Department’s public sanctions list of Russian elites and oligarchs,” said House Oversight Committee Chairman Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.), whose panel is leading investigations into the Biden family’s overseas influence-peddling.

Yevtushenkov, contacted by The Post through Sistema’s press department, declined to comment — including about whether he bought property in cooperation with Hunter Biden. The Post’s first source said he had heard second-hand that three properties may have been purchased in the US as part of the partnership.

Baturina, whose US investments may have reached an eye-popping nine figures, was contacted through her BE OPEN think tank, but did not immediately respond to questions, nor did an attorney for Hunter Biden or spokespeople for the White House.

A Post reporter asked President Biden Wednesday on the White House lawn for an explanation of the non-sanctioning of his son’s Russian oligarch associates, but Biden didn’t reply and it’s unclear if he heard the question as he walked to his Marine One helicopter.

Biden allies previously sought to downplay his association with Baturina and the \$3.5 million. An anonymous source told the Washington Post last year that Archer was supposed to dissolve the corporate entity that received the funds, but secretly kept it in existence for his own use.

However, emails from Hunter’s laptop show he was actively engaged in courting Baturina. About a month after the transfer, Archer wrote to Hunter to say he was “[w]ith Yelena” and an April 26, 2014, email from Hunter to Archer said “we should ask Yelena to fund a short-term development team to scope projects” after an attempted real estate deal in Manhattan fell through.

The Biden campaign in 2020 vaguely denied that the April 2015 Cafe Milano meetup even occurred, saying, “[W]e have reviewed Joe Biden’s official schedules from the time and no meeting, as alleged by the New York Post, ever took place.” After Biden won the presidency, WFP USA’s former president Rick Leach told the Washington Post that Joe Biden did attend —but only briefly to meet with Greek Orthodox leader Alex Karloutsos.

Joe Biden’s interaction with his son’s post-Soviet associates at the meal is a pillar of Republican arguments that Biden misused his official roles to financially benefit his family.



to scope projects” in an email from his laptop.

They also point to Hunter joining his dad aboard Air Force Two for trips to China and Mexico while the younger Biden sought business, as well as a White House arrangement developed in 2021 for Hunter to secretly sell his novice artworks to undisclosed buyers.

Hunter Biden, who reportedly is under federal investigation for possible tax fraud, money laundering and illegal foreign lobbying, said in communications retrieved from his former laptop that he paid as much as “half” of his income to his father and a 2017 email described 10% of a financial windfall being held for the “big guy” as part of a business deal being negotiated in China.

Two former Hunter Biden associates have identified Joe Biden as the “big guy”.

Meanwhile, Biden’s administration touted last week that it had enacted “more than 2,500 sanctions” meant to cripple Russia’s economy and halt the war in Ukraine.



mentioned as getting cuts of his son's business deals.

"The greater story is that the US has sanctioned very few oligarchs," Swedish economist and sanctions expert Anders Åslund told The Post. "It is quite difficult to follow now since each of [the] seven different Western communities have sanctioned on average 1,200 Russians."

Åslund, a former fellow at the Atlantic Council, said he felt certain powerful Russians were more deserving of US sanctions, such as billionaire Roman Abramovich, the former owner of English Premier League soccer club Chelsea.

"I agree that Yevtushenkov should be sanctioned, but he is in the fourth row of oligarchs," he said.

Yevtushenkov had a dustup with Russian President Vladimir Putin's administration about nine years ago when the Kremlin effectively seized Sistema's large oil subsidiary. One of The Post's sources described him as being more closely linked to Putin ally and former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev than with Putin himself.

McFaul, the former US ambassador to Russia, declined to comment specifically on Baturina, but did say: "Every billionaire in Russia should be sanctioned unless they do something to clearly distance themselves from Putin and the war."

Daniel Fried, the Obama administration's coordinator for sanctions policy following the Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014, said that he believes the Biden administration was being "prudent" in reviewing the possible collateral effects of sanctioning billionaires with international holdings.

Yevtushenkov, who has denied reports that he's Baturina's brother-in-law, "is not someone we had squarely in our sights" during the Obama administration, Fried added.

"I'm not going to tell you he's a good guy, but he wasn't a primary target" because "he wasn't particularly close with Putin," the ex-official went on. "Remember, the Trump administration continued the sanctions in 2017 and they didn't go after him either."

Fried, who also was US ambassador to Poland during the Clinton administration, said his sense was that sanctions will continue to expand against Russia's elite and that he doubts Joe Biden or even high-level deputies with deep ties to his family, such as Secretary of State Antony Blinken or national security adviser Jake Sullivan, are making decisions on individual names.

"If you're a sanctions person and you're doing your due diligence, you want to make damn sure that there are not going to be unintended consequences," Fried said. "I sniffed around a little bit and my sense is people are doing due diligence [and] not hesitating — they're not shying away, they're doing the proper due diligence."

Yevtushenkov, who Hunter also reportedly met in Moscow in February 2012, has taken steps to avoid attention amid the Ukraine war. One source who spoke to The Post recalled him ruling like an all-powerful czar over Sistema's board, while another called him a decent person and Russian "patriot."

In April 2022, Yevtushenkov reduced his ownership stake in Sistema to 49.2% in apparent response to UK sanctions, giving his son Feliz 10% of his own stake in the company.

Sistema said last year, months after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that it had quietly reduced its share in military contractors RTI and Kronstadt below 50% in July 2021 before completely divesting by May 2022.

By Steven Nelson

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