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TRUMP'S NOMINEE FOR FBI DIRECTOR WORKS FOR A LAW FIRM REPRESENTING ONE OF RUSSIA'S LARGEST NATIONAL OIL COMPANIES: CAN HE REALLY BE COUNTED ON TO OVERSEE A VIGOROUS INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE COLLUSION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE TRUMP TEAM?

By: Kenneth F. McCallion June 7, 2017

On paper, Christopher A. Wray appears to be an excellent choice to serve as the next FBI Director. As a Yale Law School graduate and executive editor of the law review, as well as a law clerk to a federal judge, Wray seems to have the impeccable academic credentials to oversee the country's chief law enforcement and investigative organization.

Wray also has had a long and distinguished career as a federal prosecutor and high-level official of the U.S. Department of Justice under President George W. Bush, where he led the successful federal investigation of Enron Corp. The FBI has referred to the work of the Enron Task Force as the "largest and most complex white-collar investigation" in the agency's history.

After 9/11, while serving as Assistant Attorney General, the Department of Justice came under criticism for its attempts to legally justify the use of enhanced interrogation techniques such as "water boarding," which many experts viewed as the equivalent of torture. No doubt the Senate Committee reviewing Wray's credentials will properly delve into Wray's views on this subject and possible participation in the decision-making process at the Justice Department that led to the "sign off" on the use of such techniques.

As a litigation partner with the prestigious Atlanta and Washington-based law firm of King & Spalding, Wray also caused more than a few eyebrows to be raised as a criminal defense lawyer for Governor Chris Christie during the "Bridgegate" investigation. When close associates of Christie were indicted for ordering the closing of some of the lanes leading to the George Washington Bridge in retaliation for perceived "failure" of the Mayor of Ft. Lee, New Jersey to support Christie in his last run for New Jersey Governor, the defense lawyers persistently demanded to see Governor Christie's cell phone and phone records. Christie apparently used this cell phone to text with others during a key state hearing into Bridgegate, and the phone was even studied during a probe that Christie commissioned into the affair. However, this key phone went "missing" thereafter for an extended time period, until it mysteriously turned up in the

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possession of Christie's lawyer – Christopher Wray. This is another subject that is likely to come up during Wray's Senate confirmation hearing.

Even more troubling is the fact that Wray's law firm – King & Spaulding – boasts on its website that it represents Rosneft, one of Russia's largest state-controlled oil companies.

<http://www.kslaw.com/imageserver/KS>.

Rosneft was prominently mentioned in the now infamous 35-page Dossier prepared by former British MI-6 agent Christopher Steele. The Dossier claims that the CEO of Rosneft, Igor Sechin, offered candidate Donald Trump, through Trump's campaign manager Carter Page, a 19% stake in the company in exchange for lifting U.S. sanctions on Russia. The dossier claims that the offer was made in July while Page was in Moscow. Ironically, the Dossier goes on to allege that, by mid-October 2016, when Sechin and Rosneft came to the conclusion that Trump was unlikely to win the Presidential election, Sechin "put feelers out to other business and political contacts" to purchase a stake in Rosneft.

By strange (or not-so-strange) coincidence, Rosneft ended up selling a 19.5% stake in the company on December 7, 2016 -- worth approximately \$11 billion -- to Qatar's state-owned wealth fund, commodity trader Glencore Plc and an unidentified Cayman Islands firm, which the owners of are also unnamed.

In 2012, Rosneft and Exxon had arranged for a \$500 billion oil drilling joint-venture, which was nixed by President Barack Obama when he imposed the 2014 sanctions that crippled Russia's ability to do business with U.S. companies. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was the CEO of Exxon at the time. The lifting of sanctions by the Trump Administration would enable Exxon to renew its joint venture agreement with Rosneft, and presumably the law firm of King & Spaulding would end up in the middle of the contract negotiations between those two companies, as well as Rosneft's negotiations with other U.S. companies who would be joining the stampede to do business with the Kremlin and its many other state-owned enterprises.

If Wray was confirmed as the FBI Director, would he have to recuse himself with regard to the FBI's critical role in the investigation currently being conducted by Special Counsel

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Robert Mueller? The FBI is supplying most of the investigative resources that Mueller must rely upon to properly conduct his investigation. Without an FBI Director who is 100% behind Mueller's investigation into meddling by Russia in the 2016 investigation and possible collusion with the Trump Team, as well as allegations that this collusion was covered up, the entire independent investigation could be placed in jeopardy. Similarly, if despite his law firm's connections with a key Russian-owned company, Wray refused to recuse himself from the Russia-Trump investigation, a serious cloud could be cast over the FBI's level of commitment to this critical matter.

One of several reasons why former Senator Joe Lieberman was generally considered to be unqualified for the FBI Director's job was that his law firm – Kasowitz, Benson, Torres – has represented Trump for many years, including the handling of Trump's lawsuit against journalist Tim O'Brian, author of "Trump Nation," who had the audacity to write that Trump was only worth \$250 million, not the billions he claimed. In other words, the nomination of Lieberman as FBI Director would have been perceived as the installation of a pro-Trump advocate in the middle of the Trump-Russia investigation, rather than the selection of a dispassionate objective leader to oversee the investigation.

Similarly, the nomination of Wray as FBI Director raises serious questions as to whether Wray – given his law firm's affiliation with Rosneft – would be perceived as an attempt by Trump to install a "Russia-friendly" Director at the helm of the FBI.

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