

# [***Opinion: Trump's dangerous $600 million problem***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BKR-0PH1-JBSS-S047-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

March 20, 2024 Wednesday 5:06 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Cable News Network All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1115 words

**Byline:** Opinion by Frida Ghitis

**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; When former President Donald Trump's lawyers [*informed the court*](https://mailtrack.io/l/228f18e587cce036e8fa5657ed8e89bdc454347b?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2024%2F03%2F18%2Fpolitics%2Ftrump-464-million-dollar-bond%2Findex.html&u=3243276&signature=a41eccb9f581f4c3) on Monday that their famously wealthy client faces "[*insurmountable difficulties*](https://mailtrack.io/l/3e2f2fa38f75edd09e56a84dffe4af7ac8fe7d7b?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2024%2F03%2F18%2Fnyregion%2Ftrump-bond-civil-fraud-case.html&u=3243276&signature=e80d74237a150966)" in raising cash for a bond to cover the massive judgment against him in the New York attorney general's civil fraud case, Trump critics may have felt some satisfaction. Facing close to $600 million in legal judgments, Trump, who has spent decades bragging about his wealth, is facing a financial crisis.

To his critics, the thinking is thatany obstacle in Trump's path puts him further from the presidency and so, makes the country safer. In this case, however, the opposite may be true.

The former, and perhaps future, president looks like he is on the financial ropes, and that makes him potentially even more dangerous. He urgently needs cash - lest he be forced to give up some of his trophy properties to satisfy the courts. That pressing need could make him vulnerable to anyone offering to help him out of his troubles, including America's enemies and rivals.

It was Trump himself who highlighted the governing conflicts that could emanate from depending on other people's money. Boasting, as he always has, of being fabulously rich, he told the 2016 voters that his campaign, unlike that of his rival, was [*completely self-funded*](https://mailtrack.io/l/c785df83e60a4ab156a49d32fb6908dcfd4def25?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2FTRANSCRIPTS%2F1510%2F15%2Febo.01.html&u=3243276&signature=d0d6f58978d94310). That wasn't true, of course, but his argument was actually correct. Nobody would control him, he claimed, because those who give you money expect something in return. "I don't need anybody's money," Trump [*said*](https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/19/politics/donald-trump-campaign-finance-crowdpac/index.html) in his June 2015 presidential campaign announcement.

Now Trump needs money, a lot of it. What would his creditors or benefactors want in return?

It was already noteworthy that Trump made a [*180-degree reversal*](https://mailtrack.io/l/8776c75daec5413823895639e622a6850e9a92e2?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnymag.com%2Fintelligencer%2Farticle%2Ftrump-tiktok-ban-reversal-china-jeff-yass-why.html&u=3243276&signature=17ba731e19c4ed20) regarding the TikTok platform not long after meeting with one of the platform's wealthy stakeholders at his Mar-a-Lago estate. He had vowed to ban the app in the US for national security reasons when he was president. Now, with Congress moving to force TikTok out of China's control, he has suddenly switched camps.

Alarm bells started going off as soon as Trump's bond predicament became public. Illinois Democratic Rep. Sean Casten posted on X, "The presumptive @GOP nominee for President is desperate for $464M (and counting)," saying that makes him a "[*massive national security risk*](https://mailtrack.io/l/a1773a27c86e576d6a15cbc8f8e3e57fa7e31a05?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FSeanCasten%2Fstatus%2F1769732740285346262&u=3243276&signature=3e95c162862b9183); any foreign adversary seeking to buy a President knows the price."

As a reminder, a New York judge last month found Trump liable for fraudulently manipulating the value of his properties, ruling that his "[*complete lack of contrition*](https://mailtrack.io/l/598de7acec2b3a818588f86fc53d4e5b45367ac4?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2024%2F03%2F19%2Fbusiness%2Ftrumps-new-york-properties-may-be-on-the-chopping-block-soon%2Findex.html%23%3A~3Atext%3DEngoron%2520wrote%2520in%2520his%2520ruling%2Coptions%252C'%25E2%2580%259D%2520Epner%2520said.&u=3243276&signature=2c0abdd6596e4417) and remorse borders on the pathological," and slapped him with a $450 million penalty, plus interest. Separately, Trump was ordered to pay more than $80 million to E. Jean Carrol in January after a jury concluded he defamed her when he denied he [*had sexually assaulted her.*](https://mailtrack.io/l/c49ff3ac920c445ab2a994d802156d36acb09bb4?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2024%2F01%2F26%2Fpolitics%2Ftakeaways-jury-verdict-trump-e-jean-carroll-defamation-trial&u=3243276&signature=2f4af615f9ee7eae) (Trump denies all wrongdoing).

In addition to nearly half a billion dollars in judgements, Trump faces massive legal fees over multiple civil and criminal cases, and his presidential campaign funds, drained after [*funding his personal legal costs*](https://mailtrack.io/l/a8ca36c7851f33fab10a02066b0e1850bea85f05?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2024%2F01%2F31%2Fpolitics%2Ffundraising-trump-legal-fees-pacs%2Findex.html%23%3A~3Atext%3DTwo%2520of%2520Donald%2520Trump's%2Cformer%2520president's%2520mounting%2520legal%2520troubles.&u=3243276&signature=16cb67c739717be0), are badly lagging behind President Joe Biden's [*massive war chest*](https://mailtrack.io/l/14fa4de965d524ee65a6cab6ba73eddb42a893c3?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.politico.com%2Fnews%2F2024%2F03%2F17%2Fbiden-fundraising-campaign-00147451&u=3243276&signature=37946f9909932703).

Anyone who thinks America's foes are not paying attention to what could become an entry gate for a Trojan Horse is suffering from wishful thinking.

Incredibly, the former president wants to bring back to his campaign none other than the [*disgraced, Russian-linked, formerly imprisoned*](https://mailtrack.io/l/51786e389770ef781b19c21bb88e86d5f54546e4?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2024%2F03%2F18%2Fpolitics%2Fpaul-manafort-trump-reelection%2Findex.html&u=3243276&signature=7f02899709545e47) operative Paul Manafort, his 2016 campaign chairman. Even without Trump's financial troubles this would raise all manner of red flags, especially concerning Russia.

Manafort had a track record of [*working for dictators*](https://mailtrack.io/l/78e4534306a0024c3dd2aab3a39625a2f1b00d32?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fus-news%2F2017%2Foct%2F30%2Fpaul-manafort-profile-donald-trump-dictators&u=3243276&signature=0c173b13ae19d7cf) around the world before he met Trump. After his stint with the 2016 Trump campaign, he was sentenced for financial crimes and served time in prison before [*Trump pardoned him*](https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/23/politics/trump-pardons-stone-manafort-kushner/index.html).

He had already received [*tens of millions*](https://mailtrack.io/l/53c3376953d5a8591f6e67fae3532a50af90421e?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bloomberg.com%2Fpolitics%2Farticles%2F2018-07-30%2Fmanafort-earned-more-than-60-million-in-ukraine-mueller-says&u=3243276&signature=dbfc557f3bc9cefd) from Russian oligarchs and pro-Kremlin Ukrainians when he approached the Trump campaign and, oddly, offered to [*work for free*](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/03/us/politics/paul-manafort-trump-campaign.html). Representing Trump at the 2016 Republican convention, he reportedly had the GOP platform [*scrap a plan supporting Ukraine*](https://mailtrack.io/l/09aa0eeb331cb31e6d0ccf3087bc51ebba4cb7e6?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonpost.com%2Fopinions%2Fglobal-opinions%2Ftrump-campaign-guts-gops-anti-russia-stance-on-ukraine%2F2016%2F07%2F18%2F98adb3b0-4cf3-11e6-a7d8-13d06b37f256_story.html&u=3243276&signature=f8cabf8b0761cec9), then already besieged by Russia. It was a startling reversal for the party.

Now Trump wants him back in, of all things, a fundraising capacity.

But there are many ways to help Trump without going through the campaign or through the president. Consider son-in-law Jared Kushner, whose professional activities since leaving his senior adviser role in the Trump administration have raised eyebrows. In addition to securing a [*$2 billion cash infusion*](https://mailtrack.io/l/879c225b822ea8a371b8f5026739465311756821?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2022%2F04%2F10%2Fus%2Fjared-kushner-saudi-investment-fund.html&u=3243276&signature=6e098c9ff788d671) from the Saudis for his investment firm, Kushner is now busy with developments in [*the Balkans*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/17/us/politics/kushner-deal-serbia-trump.html).

Last week, he confirmed he's closing in on [*major real estate businesses*](https://mailtrack.io/l/08fb9d96432e747b7ade413e3c2744406d56b528?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2024%2F03%2F15%2Fus%2Fpolitics%2Fjared-kushner-pursuing-development-deals-in-albania-and-serbia.html&u=3243276&signature=cb5ea7b6943084cd) in Albania and Serbia. Regardless of the legality and (in)appropriateness of the deals, the fact that Trump's son-in-law, a former White House official, is making [*hundreds of millions of dollars' worth*](https://mailtrack.io/l/cbd538cb240a29c161d58c0c7d3a29e4a96751bc?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2024%2F03%2F17%2Fus%2Fpolitics%2Fkushner-deal-serbia-trump.html&u=3243276&signature=a9b9c964ef0917d2) of business deals abroad, including in places like Serbia, which has [*close connections to Russia*](https://mailtrack.io/l/afd4e72e830cc64505cfed49689e82fe5b28232b?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.euractiv.com%2Fsection%2Fpolitics%2Fnews%2Fserbia-and-russia-pledge-deeper-cooperation-after-warm-brotherly-welcome%2F&u=3243276&signature=b9ecf715aac0da39), potentially creates more openings for cash infusions and interference by people seeking to pay for influence in US ***politics*** with an eye toward obtaining their favored government policy as a payoff.

If, indeed, foreign money comes to Trump's rescue, it wouldn't be the first time.

When Trump ran through his inheritance, sending several of his businesses into bankruptcy in the 1990s, banks wouldn't touch him, but [*Russian billionaires came to the rescue*](https://mailtrack.io/l/94b58422560621ca12c07fd511239566a83617d2?url=https%3A%2F%2Fforeignpolicy.com%2F2018%2F12%2F21%2Fhow-russian-money-helped-save-trumps-business%2F&u=3243276&signature=0f02f550075af1ca).

By 2008, Donald Trump Jr., the former president's son, told a real estate conference in New York that "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets," adding, "we see a lot of [*money pouring in from Russia*](https://mailtrack.io/l/6d76b4225d5e8fcd516c88611b31bdf98e754acf?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonpost.com%2Fpolitics%2Fheres-what-we-know-about-donald-trump-and-his-ties-to-russia%2F2016%2F07%2F29%2F1268b5ec-54e7-11e6-88eb-7dda4e2f2aec_story.html&u=3243276&signature=3552333528efd418)."

Now, there's a lot of wealth sloshing around the globe and much of it, perhaps all of it, would like to buy influence. Foreign or domestic funders might ask for favors in exchange for their support.

We have no evidence that any Russian has approached Trump or Kushner or Manafort so far. And, to be fair, Trump already aligns with the wishes of Russian President Vladimir Putin, particularly concerning Ukraine, a war Trump sounds as if [*he wants Putin to win*](https://mailtrack.io/l/7afdcbbc3ed5f7d89fb5a080782ae972f430ab77?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theatlantic.com%2Fideas%2Farchive%2F2024%2F02%2Fone-global-issue-trump-cares-about%2F677592%2F&u=3243276&signature=e5b72e07d1d94895).

Already Saudi Arabia has boosted Jared and his wife Ivanka Trump's fortunes. We don't know what, if anything, the Saudis wanted in return.

Trump's "insurmountable" money problems could easily become America's problems, because there's a fairly good chance he could become president again and, at this very moment, he is looking for a way to surmount these problems at a cost that only he may fully know.

Opinion by Frida Ghitis

TM & © 2024 Cable News Network, Inc., a Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.

**Load-Date:** May 14, 2024

**End of Document**