

Russian oligarch responds to Trump airport connection



Donald Trump purchased 515 N. County Road in 2004 and sold it in 2008 for a recorded \$95 million. (Palm Beach Daily News file photo)

For the first time, Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev confirmed his plane and [President Donald Trump's](#) jet shared the tarmac in Charlotte five days before the general election, saying he was in North Carolina for a business reason.

In addition, Rybolovlev through a spokesman reiterated he has never met the Republican billionaire despite [buying the Maison de L'Amitié Palm Beach mansion](#) from him nine years ago.

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“Particular attention has been focused on a trip made by Mr. Rybolovlev to North Carolina,” said Sergey Chernitsyn, an adviser to Dmitry Rybolovlev. “He was in North Carolina for a business meeting and we can state categorically that he did not have any contact with Mr. Trump or any of his advisers at the time he was there.”

Chernitsyn issued a statement to The Palm Beach Post after it reported Friday additional details surrounding Rybolovlev's [purchase of a Palm Beach mansion from Trump in 2008](#) for \$95 million — the largest price paid for a Palm Beach home at the time.

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Rybolovlev, formerly a fertilizer mogul, never lived in the 62,000-foot mansion. It's now been torn down and divided into three parcels, one of which recently sold for \$34 million.

Trump has been steadfast that he has no ties to Russia after conceding that country run by Vladimir Putin tried to influence the U.S. presidential election. He tweeted in January, “I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH RUSSIA - NO DEALS, NO LOANS, NO NOTHING!” and has repeatedly derided any news reports about links between his campaign and Russia as fake news.

However, in February, Gen. Michael Flynn resigned as National Security Advisor after misleading the vice president about his meetings with Soviet ambassador Sergey I. Kislyak.



Dmitry Rybolovlev

Attorney General Jeff Sessions this month recused himself of any investigations into Russia after news reports that he failed to tell Congress during his confirmation hearing about two meetings with Kislyak.

Speculation that Trump had been in contact with Rybolovlev was stoked when FAA records showed the oligarch's A319 grey-and-white jet landed in Charlotte just as the then Republican presidential candidate was visiting the area for a campaign rally in Concord on Nov. 3.

Trump's plane arrived at Charlotte Douglas International Airport 90 minutes after Rybolovlev.

The McClatchy News Services reported limousine companies and local luxury hotels in Concord didn't have any record of ferrying Rybolovlev. But the arrival of Rybolovlev's plane certainly made an impression.

“Even Trump’s plane is not that nice,” Mike Dockery, president of Concord Air Center, told McClatchy. “It looks like a sheik’s airplane.” Dockery said the plane did take on fuel and his son saw a man leave on a golf cart from the oligarch’s plane during its stay.

Anna-Catherine Sendikoski was at the airport when she saw Rybolovlev’s blue-and-grey plane arrive, followed 20-minutes later by Trump’s easily recognizable aircraft. “It was just suspect to me,” Sendikoski told McClatchy. “It just seemed strange.”



Credit: Jeffrey Langlois

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Donald Trump stands in front of 515 N. County Road, the estate he bought at auction for about \$41 million, renovated and then sold in 2008 at a recorded \$95 million. (Palm Beach Daily News file photo)

The Trump Administration has called questions about the Concord event “ridiculous” and denied any member of the Trump campaign or family met with Rybolovlev at any time.

"For a press corps so obsessed with evidence, proof and feigning a general disgust at even the hint of conspiracy, this is pretty rich," the [White House told the website Business Insider](#).

The plane, according to FAA records, also was in Las Vegas on Oct. 30 when Trump appeared at a nearby campaign rally.

Another juxtaposition of Trump and Rybolovlev occurred just last month when the oligarch's plane landed at Miami International Airport while Trump was at Mar-a-lago on Palm Beach entertaining the

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"Mr. Rybolovlev travels frequently to many different destinations, including destinations across the U.S.," Chernitsyn said. "If Mr. Rybolovlev was physically in the same place as Mr. Trump at any time, this was pure coincidence."



Donald Trump purchased 515 N. County Road in 2004 and sold it in 2008 for a recorded \$95 million. (Palm Beach Daily News file photo)

Chernitsyn told The Post on Friday that reports using circumstantial evidence to support a relationship between Rybolovlev and Trump are simple speculation.

"None of these theories has any foundation in fact," he said. "Mr. Rybolovlev has never met Mr. Trump personally and has no connection whatsoever to Mr. Trump or his team of advisers."

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According to county records, Rybolovlev acquired the Palm Beach property below costs through an entity, County Road Property LLC. Eventually, the property moved into a family trust.

"There is every prospect that this investment will turn out to be profitable," Chernitsyn said. "Throughout the process of the trust's purchase, Mr. Rybolovlev had no personal contact with Mr. Trump."

Public records show the property was purchased by a company, County Road Property LLC. At the time Rybolovlev said through a spokesman, "This acquisition is simply an investment by one of the companies in which I have an interest."

The property later was moved into a family trust.