

Kash Patel was paid by Russian filmmaker with Kremlin ties, documents show

Patel, Trump's nominee to be FBI director, was paid \$25,000 last year by a film company that has promoted anti-Western views advanced by the Kremlin, documents show.

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Kash Patel appears Jan. 30 before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on his nomination to be FBI director. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

By [Greg Miller](#), [Jon Swaine](#), [Catherine Belton](#), [Mark Berman](#) and [Derek Hawkins](#)

Kash Patel, President Donald Trump's nominee to be FBI director, was paid \$25,000 last year by a film company owned by a Russian national who also holds U.S. citizenship and has produced programs promoting "deep state" conspiracy theories and anti-Western views advanced by the Kremlin, according to a financial disclosure form Patel submitted as part of his nomination process and other documents.

Documents obtained by The Washington Post show that Patel received the money from Global Tree Pictures, a Los Angeles-based company run by Igor Lopatonok, a filmmaker whose previous projects include a pro-Russian influence campaign that received money from a fund created by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The payment to Patel came as he participated in a documentary that Lopatonok produced depicting Patel and

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other veterans of the first Trump administration as victims of a conspiracy that “destroyed the lives of those who stood by Donald Trump in an attempt to remove the democratically elected president from office.”

The six-part series, titled “All the President’s Men: The Conspiracy Against Trump,” aired in November on right-wing broadcaster Tucker Carlson’s online network. In one segment, Patel vowed to “shut down the FBI headquarters building and open it up as a museum to the ‘deep state.’”

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The details surrounding the payment to Patel add to the questions Democratic lawmakers and many veteran national security experts have raised about his nomination. If Patel is confirmed, the agency responsible for defending against Russian espionage operations inside the United States would be led by someone who months earlier had taken money from a perceived ally of the Kremlin.

“Mr. Patel has gone above and beyond in this advice and consent process,” said Erica Knight, Patel’s spokesperson, in response to questions from The Post. “That includes countless meetings with Senators, disclosing and reporting all sources of income, submitting hundreds of pages of documents, replying to hundreds of pages of questions for the record, and testifying for six hours with multiple rounds of questioning before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Senate has evaluated all potential conflicts and concerns. Mr. Patel looks forward to a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee this Thursday and being swiftly confirmed by the Senate so he can start working to refocus the FBI on making our country safer.”

Lopatonok did not respond to requests for comment.

A spokesperson for Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), the committee’s chairman, said in a statement: “As part of the nominations process, Patel has complied with all financial disclosure requirements. The Office of Government Ethics and the Department of Justice have reviewed and approved his financial disclosures. Any effort to raise concerns about Patel’s financial disclosures should be dismissed as an

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obvious smear campaign.”

The Judiciary Committee’s planned vote this week on Patel’s nomination was delayed until next week amid objections raised by Democratic members of the panel. Democrats have broadly opposed Patel’s nomination, portraying him as an extremist with scant leadership experience who would use the FBI to retaliate against people he and Trump view as adversaries.

Sen. Dick Durbin (Illinois), the committee’s top Democrat, has said the committee should bring Patel back for additional questioning, including about the ongoing investigation and removal of Justice Department and FBI officials who worked on Jan. 6 cases.

As FBI director, Patel would hold one of the highest-ranking positions in an administration that has signaled potential reversals on U.S. policy toward Russia. Trump has questioned U.S. support to Ukraine amid concerns among U.S. and European officials that he may seek to end the war on terms favorable to Moscow. U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi moved swiftly to dismantle a special unit established during the Biden administration to enforce sanctions on Russia and pursue violations by pro-Putin oligarchs.

The payment Patel received is listed as an “honorarium” on a financial disclosure report submitted to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, an agency tasked with reviewing financial disclosures for Senate-confirmed nominees within the executive branch.

The disclosure report, along with an ethics agreement he signed, provide a more detailed look at Patel’s income and work than the written answers he provided to senators’ questions ahead of his confirmation hearing last month. Both the disclosure report and ethics pledge were completed last month, but they were not made publicly available until they were posted on the Office of Government Ethics website two days after Patel’s hearing.

In his paperwork, Patel described consulting work for clients including Trump’s media company and the Qatari Embassy and writing books. Patel wrote that he stepped away from some of his activities already and would stop other work

some of his activities already and would stop other work while serving as FBI director, while also pledging to divest his interests in companies including Apple, Eli Lilly, Palantir and Meta, the parent company overseeing Facebook and Instagram.

Patel did not vow to entirely sever himself from the businesses and enterprises he worked on between Trump's two terms, however. He wrote that he would continue receiving royalties and licensing income for the books he has published and also said he would retain stock in a Cayman Islands-based company where he had worked as a consultant.

Lopatonok, a native of Ukraine who moved from Russia to Los Angeles in 2008, has been unapologetic about the pro-Russian stance of his projects.

In a [podcast interview](#) last year, Lopatonok acknowledged that he had been accused of being "a Russian asset, a Kremlin agent, etcetera" because of the pro-Russian angles of his films. "I don't care, because I believe that people of the world need to have alternative vision from a mainstream media narrative," he said.

Lopatonok traveled to Moscow at least three times between 2012 and 2014, according to his social media posts, and was publicly critical of the 2014 protests in Kyiv that ousted the country's pro-Kremlin president. In October that year, Lopatonok released "Maidan Massacre," a film that sought to counter widely established findings that pro-Russian forces and mercenaries were behind the killings of dozens of anti-government activists during the protests.





Film director Igor Lopatonok during the Rome Film Festival in 2021. (Vittorio Zunino Celotto/Getty Images)

In 2019, Lopatonok and a partner released another documentary, “Revealing Ukraine,” that adhered to Kremlin talking points. At its premiere in Italy, Lopatonok appeared on the red carpet with Viktor Medvedchuk, a wealthy Ukrainian former lawmaker and Putin ally who appeared in the film. Medvedchuk was later charged with treason in Ukraine but was transferred to Russia in 2022 in a prisoner swap.

Months after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Lopatonok began circulating a proposal for a new project that would seek “to stop the process of financing the war, stop the supply of weapons and the flooding of Ukraine with money from the United States and its satellites,” according to a document obtained by The Post.

That proposal was sent to a member of the team of Dmitry Peskov, the longtime Putin spokesman and deputy administration chief of the Kremlin. The proposal carried instructions indicating that its contents should be approved by Peskov, according to two European intelligence officials familiar with the document who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

in the document, Lopatonok wrote that he already had approval and support from their partner of “many years,” including the powerful director of a Russian state television channel, as well as from Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Peskov did not respond to a request for comment. It’s unclear how the Kremlin responded to Lopatonok’s proposal.

In March 2023, Lopatonok was named artistic director of a Russian influence campaign that received about \$31,000 in funding from a foundation that Putin created for cultural initiatives, according to records obtained by The Post. The campaign, titled “To Russia With Love,” solicited online videos as part of a contest to counter depictions in Western media of “how terrible it is to live in Russia and how good it is to move to the West,” according to a funding application document.

Lopatonok, 57, has faced repeated financial difficulties, including a lawsuit from a former business partner alleging theft of funds. Lopatonok denied the allegations, countersued, and the case was settled. In 2018, Lopatonok twice filed for bankruptcy, according to court documents.

Other records indicate that Lopatonok is linked to a recently formed company in Russia. Last year, Vera Tomilova, a film producer who has frequently partnered with Lopatonok, registered a company called Global 3 Pictures in Moscow. The name resembles that of the Los Angeles-based company that paid Patel, Global Tree Pictures. Russian registration records list a Lopatonok email account as a point of contact. Tomilova did not respond to requests for comment.

Tomilova co-wrote and co-produced the “All The President’s Men” series and praised Patel’s role in it, saying in an online post that he “is a great human and he can see things clear and fair.” Carlson, the former Fox News host whose online network aired the program, has used his broadcasts to voice support for Russia in its war with Ukraine and traveled to Moscow last year for an interview with Putin.

In a brief telephone interview, Carlson said his network struck a deal with the filmmakers to broadcast the documentary series but was not involved beyond that. “I

literally know nothing about this,” Carlson said. “I didn’t make the film, and I certainly didn’t pay Kash Patel.”

Neil Patel, the chief executive of TCN, told The Post that the network paid the producers for the film on a “performance-based” arrangement. He declined to say how much was paid.

The Moscow production company, Global 3 Pictures, has established accounts with the Russian state-owned bank VTB, according to records published by Russia’s Federal Taxation Service. VTB has been a target of U.S. Treasury sanctions since 2014, when Russia illegally annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea.

Subsequent restrictions imposed in 2022 ban U.S. citizens from engaging in any transactions with VTB without prior approval from the U.S. government.

Kash Patel gained prominence during Trump’s first term as a combative staff member on the House Intelligence Committee who played a key role in Republican efforts to discredit investigations into Trump’s ties with Russia. In a lengthy interview in the “All The President’s Men” documentary, Patel disparages U.S. intelligence assessments that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential campaign to boost Trump’s candidacy.

Patel goes on to describe Russia and China as “dynamic adversaries of ours” but says that Moscow is not among the United States’ “true enemies,” a designation he applied to Iran, terrorist groups including al-Qaeda and narcotics traffickers.

Other participants in the documentary included Trump’s former campaign adviser Stephen K. Bannon, former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, and former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who resigned in early 2017 after making false statements about his conversations with the Russian ambassador.

Documents filed as part of Giuliani’s bankruptcy proceedings show that Lopatonok’s Global Tree Pictures provided Giuliani’s company, Giuliani Communications, with \$100,000 in two installments to be a speaker in the docuseries. A spokesperson for Giuliani did not respond to

requests for comment.

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