
ALBANIA OPPOSITION DENIES LINKS TO RUSSIAN ELECTION MEDDLING

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The Washington Post (7 March 2018)

Albanias Democratic Party, the main opposition group, has rejected allegations by U.S. publication Mother Jones that the party received secret funds from Russian sources during last years parliamentary election.

Mother Jones alleged in an article published Tuesday that Russian-linked companies used a U.S. lobbyist to secretly meddle in Albanias 2017 election.

According to the article Nick Muzin, a former campaign aide for U.S. President Donald Trump, was paid by a sketchy Scottish firm called Biniatta Trade, which was formed by two Belize-based shell companies ... for work in the United States to help the Democratic Party of Albania.

It appears that Russian-related entities secretly meddled in the United States in order to meddle in an election in Albania, the Mother Jones story said.

On Wednesday, the conservative Democrats rejected the allegations, accusing Prime Minister Edi Rama of the left-wing Socialist Party of funding a ridiculous story ... with false facts.

The story is the product of a wide campaign undertaken by Edi Rama, which is funded with illegal sources coming from the world of crime and corruption, the Democrats said a statement.

The Democrats, who suffered a major setback in Junes election, signed a contract with U.S. lobbyist Nick Muzin, funded by a Russian-linked company, to set up a meeting for party leader Lulzim Basha with Trump and four Republican senators so he could trumpet that (support) in Albania ahead of the polls.

Days before the election in Albania, Muzin arranged a \$20,000 ([REDACTED]) VIP seat for Basha at a Milwaukee fundraiser and a photograph with Trump.

Muzin also said Albanias Democrats paid him \$500,000 ([REDACTED]) through Biniatta Trade, just days before he arranged for Basha to have that important photo op with Trump.

The opposition party, however, insisted that it has not had nor does it have any direct or indirect link with Russian individuals or companies.

The Russian Embassy in Tirana said the Mother Jones story was totally absurd fiction and part of a dirty media campaign against the country by the West.

The goal is clear [REDACTED] to impose a distorted perception of our country and to undermine further

positive developments in the cooperation between Russia and Albania, the embassy said in a statement.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/albania-opposition-denies-links-to-russian-election-meddling/2018/03/07/161d1bbc-2225-11e8-946c-9420060cb7bd_story.html?utm_term=.768ad34ab196

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