

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Select Committee
Fr: Select Committee Staff
Re: Malign Foreign Influence
Dt: December 19, 2022

As defined by the Intelligence Community, election influence includes “overt and covert efforts by foreign governments or actors acting as agents of, or on behalf of, foreign governments intended to affect directly or indirectly a US election – including candidates, political parties, voters or their preferences, or political processes.”¹ With respect to the 2020 presidential election, the Intelligence Community’s Assessment concluded that “Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden’s candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbating sociopolitical divisions in the US.”²

This memorandum describes staff research regarding illustrative examples of how potential efforts by foreign actors to influence the American political climate may have manifested during and after the 2020 presidential election.³ The sections that follow detail the behavior of several individuals present in and around the Capitol on January 6th, each of whom presented a narrative of the events of that day that Russian media platforms amplified. These examples have been identified through staff review of public sources including public-facing social media postings. It is important to underscore that it is not possible based on this review of public sources to draw conclusions regarding whether any of these individuals intended that their activities on or in connection with January 6th advance narratives promoted by foreign malign interests regarding the 2020 US presidential election or either of the principal candidates.

I. Yelena Nikitskaya

¹ National Intelligence Council, “Intelligence Community Assessment: Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections,” ICA 2020–00078D, (Mar. 10, 2021), Definitions, available at <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf> (archived).

² National Intelligence Council, “Intelligence Community Assessment: Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections,” ICA 2020–00078D, (Mar. 10, 2021), pp. i, 2, Key Judgment 2, available at <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf> (archived).

³ Select Committee staff produced this memorandum and conducted related research pursuant to House Resolution 503 which invites the Select Committee to “investigate the facts, circumstances, and causes relating to the domestic terrorist attack on the Capitol, including facts and circumstances relating to – ... how ... malign foreign influence operations and campaigns may have factored into the motivation, organization, and execution of the domestic terrorist attack on the Capitol; ...” H. Res. 503, (June 30, 2021), 117th Cong., 1st Sess., Sec. 4(a)(1)(B), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/503/text>.

On December 13, 2018, Maria Butina, a Russian national resident in the United States, pleaded guilty to a Federal criminal charge of conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign government. She was sentenced to 18 months in prison.⁴ Butina was the architect of a plan to influence U.S. Government policy in ways advantageous to Russia through contacts with politically influential gun-rights advocates, including the National Rifle Association, that were likely to be able to influence U.S. policy during the incoming Presidential administration.

Further to the plan, working with a U.S. person co-conspirator and at the direction of a senior Russian official, Butina engaged in a variety of activities designed to develop and expand contacts with those likely to be able to exert influence over the next U.S. President's policies.⁵ She solicited and received guidance and direction from her Russian official controller throughout the period she conducted her unacknowledged influence activities in the United States on behalf of Russia. At one point, Butina had a romantic relationship with Patrick Byrne, the then-CEO of Overstock.com, a serial conspiracy peddler and very public supporter of President Trump (who, in a curious twist, later sent Butina a large amount of money). Byrne, whom the Select Committee interviewed, has made no secret of his unofficial role as adviser to the Trump administration.⁶ On her release from prison in 2019, the United States deported Butina to Russia.

In sentencing Butina the judge summarized the activity that earned Butina her conviction: "She [Butina] was seeking to collect information about individuals and organizations that could be helpful to the Russian government, and she was doing this under the direction of a Russian official for the benefit of the Russian government at a time when the Russian government was acting to interfere and affect the United States' political and electoral process."⁷

⁴ See "Russian National Sentenced to 18 Months in Prison for Conspiring to Act As an Agent of the Russian Federation within the United States," U.S. Department of Justice, (Apr. 26, 2019), available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/russian-national-sentenced-18-months-prison-conspiring-act-agent-russian-federation-within>.

⁵ Statement of Offense, *United States v. Butina*, No. 1:18-cr-00218-TSC (D.D.C. Dec. 13, 2018), ECF No. 66. See also, Spencer S. Hsu and Rosalind S. Helderman, "Maria Butina, Russian Who Conspired to Infiltrate Conservative U.S. Political Groups, Sentenced to 18 Months," *Washington Post*, (Apr. 26, 2019), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/maria-butina-russian-who-conspired-to-infiltrate-the-nra-due-for-sentencing/2019/04/25/3ff24216-66ce-11e9-82ba-fcfeff232e8f_story.html.

⁶ Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, Transcribed Interview of Patrick Byrne, (July 15, 2022).

⁷ Transcript of Sentencing, *United States v. Butina*, No. 1:18-cr-00218-TSC (D.D.C. Apr. 26, 2019), ECF No. 120, p. 35, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1212506/download>.

It was, therefore, notable that, on January 11, 2021, Butina—now living in Russia—interviewed Yelena Nikitskaya, a Crimea-born Russian émigré living in the United States, about the January 6th rally and Capitol attack. Nikitskaya, a budding social media influencer, live-streamed herself on YouTube marching to the Capitol on January 6, 2021.⁸ Butina, co-host of a television show billed as the Russian version of “60 Minutes,” interviewed Nikitskaya and played portions of Nikitskaya’s footage marching to the Capitol, as well as videos showing violence in and around the Capitol that day.

On January 6th, Nikitskaya was among those who marched on the Capitol. She would have appeared relatively unremarkable among the rallygoers—just another “Stop-the-Steal” zealot recording portions of the day’s tumultuous events from the fringes. She has not, to date, been charged with any crime stemming from her actions that day. She is, quite simply, another face in the January 6th crowd.

Closer attention to her activities before and since the Capitol attack raise her profile, hinting at several more interesting associations. Nikitskaya was born in the heavily Russian Ukrainian territory of Crimea. She had, since her 2014 arrival in the United States, become an activist in Russian diaspora-centered right-wing circles. She settled initially in Sacramento, California, where she worked for a local media company called Russian American Media (RAM). Not surprisingly, RAM’s core market is the Russian-speaking community in the Sacramento area. Her social media posts showed her visiting the California State Assembly several times and meeting with various elected officials.⁹

Nikitskaya eventually left RAM to launch her own social media marketing firm, Dezaro Marketing, and moved to South Carolina.¹⁰ During the same period, Nikitskaya became more deeply involved with far-right, Russian-speaking religious organizations in the United States. Beginning in 2019, Nikitskaya appeared regularly at far-right events and on social media. Nikitskaya served as a speaker at a hard-right “Watchmen of the Walls” conference in Latvia in 2020.¹¹ At about the same time, in 2020, Nikitskaya became a guest political commentator on several Russian state-run television channels, including Rossiya-1, Rossiya-24, and RTVI. When

⁸ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Jan. 6, 2021, Yelena Nikitskaya photograph of YouTube live stream: “It all starts in the square in Washington D.C.”).

⁹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Nov. 6, 2018, Yelena Nikitskaya Instagram post of photograph at California State Senate).

¹⁰ Kevin G. Hall, “An Insurrection Raged, a South Florida Video Blogger Provided a Play-by-Play - to Russians,” *Miami Herald*, (Apr. 14, 2021), available at <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article250505589.html>.

¹¹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Mar. 12, 2020, Yelena Nikitskaya Instagram post of photograph from “Watchmen of the Walls” group conference).

she did, she zeroed in on what she saw as flaws and other outrages of the American political and social scene (*e.g.*, “Trump supporters are being targeted and may be fired” and “Provocations against Trump supporters”). She also amassed tens of thousands of subscribers on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube (85, 000 subscribers and over 10 million video views), VK (a predominately Russian platform similar to “Facebook”), and Telegram.

During and since the 2020 election, Nikitskaya’s social media posts largely mirrored core Russian disinformation themes. After the election, her topics of choice centered on anti-vaccine and anti-mask messages, voter fraud allegations, the dangers of mail-in voting, and President Biden’s health and mental acuity. Although she appears to adopt a pro-Ukraine stance on social media, her posts do not directly criticize Russia and she continues to appear as a guest on Russian state TV.¹²

II. Oligarchs

Russia did not cause the January 6th attack on the Capitol, and one can be confident that none of Russia’s “oligarchs”—now chiefly famous as the subculture of those who were allowed to amass enormous wealth as monopolistic owners of the nation’s formerly state-owned resources—attended. Their involvement was, instead, veiled, and indirect. The pro-Russia propaganda and anti-American disinformation some promoted amounted to no more than “influencing factors” helping to animate a mob already hell-bent on ensuring that President Trump remained in office.¹³ The chaotic and violent images recorded at the Capitol that day provided ample material for Russian propagandists to exploit.

These efforts are well-funded and sophisticated. Their offerings mimic Western network media. For example, Konstantin Malofeyev, who was, then as now, subject to public U.S. sanctions for funding pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists, nevertheless succeeded in engaging a former Fox News producer, John Hanick, who, over a 4-year period, is alleged to have worked to open sophisticated media platforms for Russia-friendly “news” messaging—while taking care to conceal Malofeyev’s sponsorship—not only in Malofeyev’s native Russia but also in Bulgaria and

¹² Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (July 29, 2022, Yelena Nikistakya Instagram post of photograph; July 19, 2022, Yelena Nikistakya Instagram post of photograph; Nov. 8, 2020, Yelena Nikistakya Instagram post of photograph; Jan. 14, 2021, photograph of YouTube post “5th Studio. Trump supporters are being targeted and may be fired-Russia 24”).

¹³ The quoted phrase is significant. The Select Committee’s organizing resolution requires that the Committee “investigate the ... influencing factors that contributed to the domestic terrorist attack on the Capitol and how technology, including online platforms, financing, and malign foreign influence operations and campaigns may have factored into the motivation, organization, and execution of the domestic terrorist attack on the Capitol;” H. Res. 503, 117th Cong., § 4(a)(1)(B), (2021), (“Functions”).

Greece.¹⁴ In March 2022, Hanick was arrested in London and charged with knowingly violating U.S. sanctions and for lying during an FBI interview. In announcing the indictment, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York called it evidence of a “commitment to the enforcement of laws intended to hamstring those who would use their wealth to undermine fundamental democratic processes.”¹⁵

Malofeyev is not alone among Russia’s oligarchs alleged to be bankrolling the Russian disinformation network worldwide. One can, in fact, at least indirectly follow Russia’s campaign of malicious influence right into the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

III. Charles Bausman

Among the thousands in the mob that stormed the Capitol on January 6th, Charles Bausman is easy to miss. Footage from the Capitol shows him entering and circulating on the fringes of the angry crowd.¹⁶ Wearing a MAGA hat, he holds his smart-phone aloft and, as he moves through the Capitol, seems preoccupied with filming the mob’s activities. He does not himself seem to be caught up in the mob’s excesses other than as a co-trespasser. He is, instead, one of its assiduous chroniclers. Then he disappeared.

Days later and from Russia, Charles Bausman emerged as a commentator on Tsargrad TV, a Russian channel owned and operated by Konstantin Malofeyev.¹⁷ There, from a Russian television studio, he gave his account of the day, interpreting it as emblematic of America’s socio-political decline and the corrosion of the American polity. It was a message familiar to Russian audiences; the Russian government had been pressing that twofold message in various forms and fora for decades. What was strikingly different was the messenger: a first-hand American witness and photo-chronicler, describing the January 6th attack, in fluent Russian, as proof of America’s accelerating decline.

Charles Bausman and Russia were, by January 2021, well acquainted. He had, as a child, spent several years in Moscow while his father served as the lead Associated Press reporter there. On returning to the United States, he attended an elite boarding school and university, going on to

¹⁴ Sealed Indictment (unsealed Mar. 3, 2022), *United States v. Hanick*, No. 1:21-cr-000676 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 4, 2021), p. 1, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/press-release/file/1479811/download>.

¹⁵ Department of Justice, “TV Producer For Russian Oligarch Charged With Violating Crimea-Related Sanctions,” Press Release No. 22–065, U.S. Attorney’s Office, S. Dist. N.Y., (Mar. 3, 2022), available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/tv-producer-russian-oligarch-charged-violating-crimea-related-sanctions>.

¹⁶ Document on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshots of Bausman in the Capitol Jan. 6, 2021, at 2:29, 2:30 p.m.).

¹⁷ Document on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshot of Bausman being interviewed in Tsargrad TV’s studio on January 20, 2021).

take a graduate degree in journalism at Columbia University. At some point after graduation he moved back to Russia, where, for decades, his professional activities are unknown. He reemerged publicly in 2014 when, weeks after Russia's first invasion of Ukraine, he launched "Russia Insider," a neo-Nazi pro-Russia website that promotes Russian president Putin as a heroic figure, while painting the United States as a failed state.¹⁸ "Russia Insider" purports to be crowd-funded, although leaked emails show that Bausman sought financial support for the site from Malofeyev.¹⁹

Bausman's media profile grew after he launched "Russia Insider." For example, he became a frequent political commentator on Russian state TV. In 2015 and 2016, Bausman also traveled to New York to serve as a featured speaker at a conference on U.S.-Russia relations organized by Elana Branson, who was arrested earlier this year and charged with acting as an illegal Russian agent in the United States for nearly a decade.²⁰ ²¹ Bausman also appeared on an episode of Alex Jones's "Info Wars" program, while accompanied by a Russian state TV film crew, and broadcast a variety of Russian propaganda and conspiracy theories.²²

Bausman returned to the United States in late 2018. He settled in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he bought a large house and a barn, which became a venue for far-right events.²³ ²⁴ For example, several of the organizers of the infamous 2017 Unite the Right Rally (Charlottesville, Virginia), including Mike Pienovich, Erik Striker, and Joseph Jordan, made the pilgrimage to Bausman's barn.²⁵ In August 2020, Bausman's barn was the site of the launch of a new, hard-right,

¹⁸ Document on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshot of the Russia Insider website's homepage).

¹⁹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshots of emails exchanged between Charles Bausman, Alexey Komov, and Konstantin Malofeyev.).

²⁰ "Dual U.S./Russian National Charged with Acting Illegally as a Russian Agent in the United States," U.S. Attorney's Office, S. Dist. N.Y., (Mar. 8, 2022), available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/dual-us-russian-national-charged-acting-illegally-russian-agent-united-states>.

²¹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshots of the Russian Federation of New York's website, operated by Elena Branson.).

²² Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Video of Alex Jones interviewing Charles Bausman on InfoWars on October 29, 2019).

²³ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Photographs of Charles Bausman's Lancaster home and barn.).

²⁴ Michael Edison Hayden, "U.S. White Nationalist Group Linked to Pro-Kremlin Propagandist," Hatewatch, (Oct. 6, 2020), p. 7, available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/10/06/us-white-nationalist-group-linked-pro-kremlin-propagandist>.

²⁵ Michael Edison Hayden, "U.S. White Nationalist Group Linked to Pro-Kremlin Propagandist," Hatewatch, (Oct. 6, 2020), p. 7, available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/10/06/us-white-nationalist-group-linked-pro-kremlin-propagandist>.

neo-Nazi political party, the “National Justice Party.” The stated goal of the National Justice Party is to create a white ethno-state and to limit Jewish employment in major industries to 2 percent.²⁶ ²⁷ During this period, new websites featuring these far-right figures—and built by the same Russian web developer who built “Russia Insider” for Bausman—were gaining traction. Though Bausman had no apparent link to any of them, all were one with “Russia Insider” in promoting pro-Russia, antisemitic, and racist content.²⁸ We have found no evidence that Bausman or the network of extremists he associated with actively promoted any candidate during the 2020 election cycle.

That changed abruptly after the election, when Bausman began energetically promoting President Trump’s fraudulent election litany and “Big Lie.” By late November, Bausman had created a Facebook group called “Lancaster County Free and Fair Elections,” where he organized “Stop-the-Steal” events and spread President Trump’s election-related lies.²⁹ At its zenith, the group had over 1,000 members. Bausman himself posted to this group 285 times between November 25th and January 6th³⁰ Bausman frequently appeared at events advertised in his Facebook group.

After President Trump’s December 19th announcement of the January 6th rally in his “will be wild!” tweet, Bausman, on Facebook, urged “all Americans to drop what they are doing and come to the demonstration in support of Trump in Washington, DC on Jan. 6,” adding “this is the big one.” His shared posts included information about the Proud Boys’ plans for January 6th, as well as practical information about “parking, traffic, hotels, where our group will meet up in DC, etc.”³¹

On January 6th, as noted, Bausman attended and circulated among the mob in the Capitol, filming the events. The next day, Bausman narrated from his Lancaster home a 30-minute special

²⁶ The Platform of the National Justice Party, National Justice Party, (Nov. 14, 2020), at p. 2, available at https://nationaljusticeparty.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NJP_Final_Platform.pdf.

²⁷ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Photographs of the National Justice Party’s launch event in Charles Bausman’s barn on August 15, 2020).

²⁸ Michael Edison Hayden, “U.S. White Nationalist Group Linked to Pro-Kremlin Propagandist,” Hatewatch, (Oct. 6, 2020), at p. 2, available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/10/06/us-white-nationalist-group-linked-pro-kremlin-propagandist>.

²⁹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshot of the “Lancaster PA for Free and Fair Elections” Facebook group homepage).

³⁰ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshots of Charles Bausman’s Facebook posts in the “Lancaster PA for Free and Fair Elections” Facebook group).

³¹ Documents on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Screenshots of Charles Bausman’s Facebook posts in the “Lancaster PA for Free and Fair Elections” Facebook group).

for a popular Russian state TV program. During this broadcast, Bausman played back his film of the day before, describing the January 6th attack as evidence that the United States had spun out of control.^{32 33} A few days later, without warning, Bausman and his family left the United States, apparently in haste, for Moscow.

In creating a pro-Putin propaganda webpage, soliciting financial support from a Russian oligarch with known ties to Russian intelligence, appearing frequently as a U.S. political commentator on Russian state TV, Bausman's actions were indistinguishable from those of a proxy for the Russian government purveying disinformation narratives to an American audience. He organized a crazy-quilt network of hard-right activists, ranging from the overtly racist and antisemitic to domestic violent extremists. While living in the United States, he appeared at events side by side with known Russian intelligence operatives. His efforts focused on expanding distrust and fomenting chaos within the American polity – and President Trump's "Stop the Steal!" campaign was exactly the opportunity he needed.

In many ways, Bausman is indistinguishable from many of the other rioters at the Capitol on January 6th. What makes him remarkable is that what he did and how he did it were completely consistent with the Russian government's long-term strategic disinformation campaign targeting the United States. That is not to assert that Bausman had any formal arrangement with the Russian government; he may or may not have. After his hasty relocation to Russia following the January 6th riot, that question may, in any event, remain unanswered.

What is beyond question is that, in the period before and since the 2020 election, Bausman's messaging activity was consonant with the Russian government's two principal strategic disinformation objectives: (1) undermine faith in U.S. democratic processes and institutions; and (2) accentuate and deepen divisions in U.S. society.³⁴ The Intelligence Community assesses that these core objectives in Russia's targeting of the United States are part of Russia's sustained, broader effort to corrode Western democracies: "Russia aims to engender

³² Charles Bausman, "Charles Bausman Interview about Jan 6 for Rossiya-1, Russian Television, English Original + Dub," Youtube, (Nov. 4, 2021), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8TL1IZnWHg&ab_channel=CharlesBausman.

³³ Document on File with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (Charles Bausman's interview with Rossiya-1 on January 7, 2021).

³⁴ National Intelligence Council, "Intelligence Community Assessment: Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections," ICA 2020-00078D, (Mar. 10, 2021), (ICA 2020-00078D, declassified by DNI Haines on Mar. 15, 2021), p. 3, available at <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf> (declassified version of classified report provided to President Trump and senior Executive Branch officials, as well as congressional leadership and the congressional intelligence oversight committees, on January 7, 2021, noting, "Throughout the election cycle, Russia's online influence actors sought to affect US public perceptions of the candidates, as well as advance Moscow's longstanding goals of undermining confidence in US election processes and increasing sociopolitical divisions among the American people").

cynicism among foreign audiences, diminish trust in institutions, promote conspiracy theories, and drive wedges in societies.”³⁵

IV. Evan Neumann

Evan Neumann was among the hundreds of Americans charged for their role in the January 6th insurrection. On December 10, 2021, Neumann was indicted on 14 federal counts for his conduct during the January 6th attack on the Capitol. The criminal complaint includes pictures of Neumann putting on a gas mask³⁶ and pushing a line of police with a bicycle rack; at one point, he appears to have reached over the bicycle rack and punched a police officer.³⁷ The complaint also notes that Neumann used heated and extremely aggressive language in confronting the police during the attack.³⁸ But even those words and actions would not, at the U.S. Capitol on the afternoon of January 6, 2021, have made Neumann stand out from the rest of the crowd.

Neumann had traveled to Washington from his home in Mill Valley, California on January 5, 2021. On January 6, he spent over three hours on restricted Capitol grounds, according to the Criminal Complaint filed in his case. He wore, very visibly, an orange scarf with Cyrillic writing and the trident symbol of Ukraine – a scarf typical of those anti-government activists wore during the so-called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, which Neumann is known to have attended in 2004-05.³⁹ ⁴⁰ On January 7, Neumann left Washington, D.C. Then, on February 16, 2021, FBI agents followed him from his home to the international terminal at San Francisco International Airport, where they interviewed him about his travel and conduct movements before, during, and immediately following the January 6th Capitol attack.⁴¹ By the time he was indicted, Neumann

³⁵ National Intelligence Council, “Emerging Dynamics – International: More Contested, Uncertain, and Conflict Prone – Contested and Transforming International Order – Increasing Ideological Competition,” *Global Trends 2040*, 7th ed., (Mar. 2021), available at <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/gt2040-home/emerging-dynamics/international-dynamics>.

³⁶ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), pp. 2-3, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

³⁷ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), pp. 3-4, 11, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

³⁸ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), pp. 3-4, 11, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

³⁹ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), p. 12, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

⁴⁰ Documents on file with the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, (MPD Bodycam Footage from AXON BODY 3X6039BC6V).

⁴¹ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), p. 13, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

was in Belarus, where, on March 22, 2022, “Belarus 1,” the Belarussian state television channel (“BelTA”), stated that Belarus had granted Neumann political asylum. A BelTA social media post stated that Neumann had left the United States due to “politically motivated charges” – *i.e.*, those stemming from his violent conduct during the January 6th attack on the Capitol.⁴² In a November 2021 interview on Belarussian state television – by then staffed by personnel from Russia’s RT⁴³ – Neumann claimed to have been surveilled by the FBI and ultimately Ukrainian security authorities.⁴⁴ He mentioned no such concerns with respect to Belarus.

As the subject of a federal indictment, were Neumann accessible to U.S. law enforcement, he would likely be among the hundreds facing arrest and trial in federal court in the District of Columbia for their January 6th actions. Neumann is, however, insulated from that risk and, judging from his relocation there and what he revealed in his Belarus 1 interviews then and since, seems to believe life in the care of Belarussian authorities is preferable. Why Belarus, a country remarkable chiefly for, Lukashenko, its hardline ruler and Putin acolyte,⁴⁵ and its role as a convenient staging ground for Russian forces engaged in the invasion of Ukraine? For a true Ukrainian freedom activist, the choice would be unexplainable, inherently contradictory. The question, then, is what to make of Neumann, how to reconcile the apparent contradictions in his known conduct and apparent affinities. We cannot know for certain.

Police body-camera footage does show that Neumann was an active and aggressively violent participant in the January 6th attack.⁴⁶ We also know that he left the United States about a

⁴² Hannah Rabinowitz, “Capitol riot suspect is granted refugee status in Belarus after fleeing US,” CNN Politics, (Mar. 22, 2022), at p. 2, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/22/politics/evan-neumann-belarus-political-asylum-january-6/index.html>.

⁴³ RT journalists and other specialists went to work at Belarussian state media outlets after the Belarussian staff left in protest over the 2020 fraudulent [Belarussian presidential] elections. As a result, the style of Belarussian state media changed to become closer to Russian- style disinformation and propaganda. U.S. Department of State Global Engagement Center, “Kremlin-Funded Media: RT and Sputnik’s Role in Russia’s Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem,” GEC Special Report, (Jan. 2022), p. 8, available at <https://www.state.gov/disarming-disinformation/>.

⁴⁴ Rachel Pannett, “Capitol riot suspect who fled to Belarus granted asylum, state media says,” *Washington Post*, (Mar. 23, 2022), at p. 1, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/evan-neumann-belarus-capitol-riot-asylum-ukraine/>; Devan Cole, “US Capitol rioter who fled to Belarus says he may seek asylum there,” CNN, (Nov. 11, 2021), available at <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/08/politics/evan-neumann-belarus-political-asylum/index.html>.

⁴⁵ *See, e.g.*, Rachel Pannett, “Capitol Riot Suspect Who Fled to Belarus Granted Asylum, State Media Says,” *Washington Post*, (Mar. 23, 2022), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/evan-neumann-belarus-capitol-riot-asylum-ukraine/>.

⁴⁶ Criminal Complaint, *U.S. v. Evan Neumann*, Case No. 1:21-mj-00331-GMH, (D.D.C., Mar. 23, 2021), pp. 2–11, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/case-multi-defendant/file/1411351/download>.

month before his indictment and that he ended up in Belarus, a close ally of Putin's Russia⁴⁷ and in no sense a supporter of Ukraine. We know that Neumann was interviewed on Belarusian state television making negative comments about both U.S. and Ukrainian authorities. We know of no allusions, in his interview, to any difficulties in entering Belarus from Ukraine, despite the backcountry border crossing into Belarus that Neumann described.⁴⁸ There is, finally, no indication that he has left Belarus.

What is certain is that Neumann's flight to Belarus and willingness to make remarks critical of the United States in giving his January 6th account on Belarusian state television supplemented Belarus's – and therefore Russia's – anti-American propaganda messaging. Belarusian state's propaganda portrayed Neumann as an ordinary person who was first a victim of "Black Lives Matter activists" and then, having "lost almost everything," was "pursued" by an overbearing "U.S. government." As is usual with foreign state-propagated malicious disinformation, there was a kernel of truth in the Belarusian account – U.S. authorities were, in fact, seeking to arrest Neumann. Omitted and replaced with lies was *why* – Neumann's aggressive and violent participation, for over three hours, in the Capitol attack.