

EXHIBIT 2

Hunter Biden Sought State Department Help for Ukrainian Company

After President Biden dropped his re-election bid, his administration released records showing that while he was vice president, his son solicited U.S. government assistance.

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Reporting from Washington

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Hunter Biden sought assistance from the U.S. government for a potentially lucrative energy project in Italy while his father was vice president, according to newly released records and interviews.

The records, which the Biden administration had withheld for years, indicate that Hunter Biden wrote at least one letter to the U.S. ambassador to Italy in 2016 seeking assistance for the Ukrainian gas company Burisma, where he was a board member.

Embassy officials appear to have been uneasy with the request from the son of the sitting vice president on behalf of a foreign company.

“I want to be careful about promising too much,” wrote a Commerce Department official based in the U.S. Embassy in Rome who was tasked with responding.

“This is a Ukrainian company and, purely to protect ourselves, U.S.G. should not be actively advocating with the government of Italy without the company going through the D.O.C. Advocacy Center,” the official wrote. Those acronyms refer to

the United States government and a Department of Commerce program that supports American companies that seek business with foreign governments.

Abbe Lowell, a lawyer for Mr. Biden, said his client “asked various people,” including the U.S. ambassador to Italy at the time, John R. Phillips, whether they could arrange an introduction between Burisma and the president of the Tuscany region of Italy, where Burisma was pursuing a geothermal project.

“No meeting occurred, no project materialized, no request for anything in the U.S. was ever sought and only an introduction in Italy was requested,” Mr. Lowell said in a statement, calling the outreach by Mr. Biden a “proper request.”

The State Department did not release the actual text of the letter.

A White House spokesman said the president was not aware when he was vice president that his son was reaching out to the U.S. Embassy in Italy on behalf of Burisma.

The department’s release of documents to The New York Times came shortly after President Biden dropped out of the presidential race, and as his son prepares to stand trial next month on charges of evading taxes on millions of dollars in income from Burisma and other foreign businesses.

Hunter Biden has not been charged with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, which requires people to disclose when they lobby the U.S. government on behalf of foreign interests.

In a court filing last week, in what was perceived as a pressure move, prosecutors indicated that they did not intend to add a FARA charge, but noted that they had evidence that Mr. Biden had reached out to the State Department on behalf of a different foreign client, a real estate magnate facing corruption charges in Romania. Mr. Biden did not register under FARA as a lobbyist for the Romanian developer or Burisma.

His outreach to the U.S. Embassy in Rome on behalf of Burisma, which has not been previously reported, echoes other episodes for which he has been criticized for implicitly leveraging his father's political clout to try to advance his foreign business.

The embassy outreach was revealed in emails released by the State Department to The Times in response to a request for public records from officials at the U.S. Embassy in Romania related to efforts by Mr. Biden and other Americans to assist the real estate developer. One of the officials named in the request had worked for the State Department in Italy before being assigned to the embassy in Romania.

The request was initially filed under the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, in June 2021. After nearly eight months, the State Department had not released any records, and The Times sued. About 18 months later, the department moved to close the case after releasing thousands of pages of records — none of which shed light on Hunter Biden's outreach to the U.S. government.



The building of a Burisma subsidiary in Kyiv. Hunter Biden was a Burisma board member in 2016 when he wrote to the U.S. ambassador to Italy seeking assistance for the company. Sean Gallup/Getty Images

The Times challenged the thoroughness of the search, noting that the department had failed to produce responsive records contained in a cache of files connected to a laptop that Mr. Biden had abandoned at a Delaware repair shop. The department resumed the search and periodic productions, but had produced few documents related to Mr. Biden until the week after his father ended his re-election campaign and endorsed Vice President Harris for the Democratic nomination.

A State Department spokeswoman suggested that the timing was coincidental, noting that the department had released batches of documents in each of the last three months, before the tranche revealing Mr. Biden's outreach to the U.S. Embassy in Rome.

A person familiar with the timing said the release of the Italy documents was planned by the State Department weeks before the president announced his decision and was cleared by the White House the week before Mr. Biden decided to drop out.

The State Department is notoriously slow when it comes to releasing public records. Its backlog of nearly 19,000 FOIA requests — some of which date back many years — at the end of fiscal year 2022 was the third largest in the federal government, according to a report issued by the Government Accountability Office this year.

The department's productions are overseen by a growing team of career public servants, not political appointees. All of that makes it unlikely that the department could have timed the release of potentially damaging records to President Biden's decision to drop out of the race, since that news was closely held until the last minute.

Still, the records are likely to fuel suspicion among Republicans, who had spent years spotlighting the younger Mr. Biden's foreign business as a blotch on his father's political career. They claimed validation when prosecutors hinted at Hunter Biden's exposure last week.

“This is, I think, the biggest political corruption scandal in our history's lifetime,” Representative James R. Comer, a Kentucky Republican and the chairman of the Oversight and Accountability Committee, said on Newsmax last week after the prosecutors' filing about Mr. Biden's outreach for his Romanian client.

While Mr. Comer's committee had released a number of reports chronicling Hunter Biden's work for foreign companies, it did not produce any evidence related to his outreach to the U.S. Embassy in Italy.

A Burisma official did not respond to a request for comment.

A businessman involved in the project said the outreach was undertaken at the request of Burisma when the company or its partners were having trouble securing regulatory approval for a geothermal energy project in Tuscany.

The difficulty is reflected in emails, found in Mr. Biden's laptop cache, from one of his associates to an Italian businessman who claimed to have ties to Enrico Rossi, the president of the Tuscany regional government at the time.

"Burisma is hoping that some of its executives can get a meeting with the president to discuss their geothermal business in Tuscany," Eric Schwerin, a longtime business partner of Hunter Biden's, wrote in an email to the Italian businessman in July 2016, attaching a letter that Mr. Biden wrote to Mr. Rossi. Around the same time, Mr. Biden was asking Mr. Phillips, the U.S. ambassador, to reach out to Mr. Rossi, according to the State Department records and interviews.

"The Ambassador already replied to one letter from Mr. Biden," the Commerce Department official wrote in an email to other U.S. government officials. "He may be shopping for more support than he got here," the official added.

Mr. Rossi said in an interview that he never met with Mr. Biden. He did not recall the U.S. Embassy reaching out to him about the project.

While Mr. Biden's letter to the ambassador is referred to in the correspondence, The Times was unable to review its contents because the State Department appears to have redacted it in its entirety. The department cited exemptions allowing the withholding of records that would compromise individual privacy, attorney client privilege or the government's deliberative process.

In an interview, Mr. Phillips said he did not remember Mr. Biden writing to him about Burisma, but he said he received a lot of letters.

If Mr. Biden had written him, "I certainly would pay attention to it," he said. "Out of courtesy, I'd probably make sure he got a response of some sort, but not necessarily from me. And I wouldn't even want to encourage it, because I wouldn't get us involved in something like that."

He said that he tried to avoid fueling the perception that connected people got special treatment.

Tuscany is known for its access to geothermal power, creating brisk competition for companies seeking to enter the space.

It is not clear whether the U.S. Embassy went to bat for Burisma. The project fizzled before it ever began drilling in Tuscany, according to the person involved in the effort.

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