



[Conflict of Interest Concerns Grow as Investment Fund Overseen by Mohammed bin Salman Continues to Profit Former President Trump and His Senior Aide Jared Kushner](#)

Recent business dealings between Saudi Arabia and Former President Trump and his son and law and former senior aide Jared Kushner have raised alarms among many watchdog organizations. There have been growing indicators that the massive amount of funds given to Trump and Kushner was a way of paying back a debt owed for favorable policies to the Saudi government, particularly policies that helped Crown Prince Mohamad bin Salman (MBS). Both Trump and Kushner's businesses suffered during the former's presidency. Kushner's latest major business dealing had left his family firm needing a \$1.2 billion bailout, while Trump's businesses had suffered from a combination of financial mishandling and bad publicity because of the association with his and his supporter's actions while he was in the White House. Luckily for both of them, MBS came to their aid, arranging for each of them to receive massive amounts of money to revive their businesses.

The day after Trump left office, Jared Kushner created a company called A Fin Management and used it as a springboard to create Affinity Partners, a private equity fund. Kushner received a 2-billion-dollar contribution from a sovereign wealth fund chaired by MBS. This was despite his lack of experience, which the Saudis were more than aware of. Confidential minutes of a meeting among the chairs of Saudi's Public Investment Fund also revealed that 4 members of the 5-person panel were not in favor of the investment, citing Kushner's inexperience and the fact that the Public Investment Fund would be bearing most of the risk. MBS overruled them and pushed the deal through. The transfer of funds was recently revealed because Kushner employed a strategy commonly used by equity firms to avoid reporting their funding sources to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Trump was also not left out of the cash infusion from MBS. Shortly after he left office, the Saudi sovereign wealth fund-backed LIV Golf series began to hold tournaments on his gold courses. The Saudis footed the entire bill, and it is estimated that the Trump organization made hundreds of millions of dollars. The Trump Organization also secured a deal with a Saudi real estate company that plans to build a Trump hotel as part of a \$4 billion golf course.

All of these lucrative business deals came after Trump's presidency, in which he implemented many policies that helped MBS rise through the ranks of Saudi politics to become the Crown Prince. One of the things that propelled MBS's standings was by scheduling Trump's first presidential trip to Saudi Arabia to meet with him. New revelations reported by the Washington Post indicate that Kushner was the driving force pushing Trump to prioritize Saudi Arabia despite his top advisors' reservations. Trump believed that the prince "owed" him because he "saved" MBS after the CIA reported that he was responsible for the killing of opinion columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

While these specific actions by Trump and Kushner are some of the most egregious of the type, it is important to note that this type of conflict of interest is not limited to these instances. This is just the symptom of a wider problem in American politics. U.S. officials have a history of cashing in favors. There is a long list of former US military officials, the highest ranking of which was General Jim Mattis, who served as a Secretary of Defense under Trump, that have also taken high-paying jobs consulting with

foreign militaries. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are the most common hirers of former military personnel. The difference with these is that the officials, before accepting their positions, must first receive approval from the United States government. This oversight is non-existent for the former president and members of Congress. Elected officials also tend to outperform the average American in the stock market, often investing in companies related to the committees they are on. The committees in the legislature often learn about confidential information that is beneficial when it comes to stock trading before the public. It is also not uncommon for politicians, upon retiring or losing reelection, to receive high-paying jobs with companies. The companies that hire these former politicians often have benefitted from policies passed by them when they were in office.

An investigation has already been launched by congressional Democrats to ensure any wrongdoing is brought to light. Legislation must be passed to ensure that this trend of government officials trading in political favors for money comes to an end. The legislation should include some type of government watchdog institution and laws limiting what government officials can do with their money, including banning stock trading among sitting members of congress. Lobbying also needs to be closely monitored. In this particular case, it is imperative that