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Cohen says he hired U.S. lobbyists for Zelensky 'out of good will'

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U.S. attorney Marcus Cohen, who hired lobbyists from Signal Group for \$70,000 to elevate Volodymyr Zelensky's profile in the United States, has said that he did so out of good will and out of his own pocket.

Cohen said this in an exclusive interview with [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#).

"It was my initiative...and I was happy to do it," he said of the lobbying work in an August 7 phone interview with RFE/RL from Washington.

According to the article, with no public social media profiles, save for a bare-bones LinkedIn account, photographs of him are hard to come by. Six analysts and political consultants with decades of experience in Ukraine told RFE/RL that they had never heard of Cohen.

"I paid for it," Cohen said, adding that he did so "out of good will" after meeting briefly with Zelensky in person in Kyiv during his presidential campaign. He did not elaborate on how he came about the large sum of money.

Reached by RFE/RL on August 8 through his spokesperson in Istanbul where he was on an official state visit, Zelensky did not deny meeting Cohen but said he did not recall the brief encounter that the attorney remembered, which came at a busy time for the campaign. "I didn't ask anyone for anything, nobody offered me anything, I didn't pay anyone, I didn't take anything from anyone. I'm my own lobbyist," Zelensky said.

At the same time, Cohen explained in the interview that he watched the Servant of the People TV series and was entertained by Zelensky. Cohen said he first heard about Zelensky and was introduced to his campaign chairman, Ivan Bakanov, through a friend of a friend whom he declined to identify.

In the short time the two were together, Cohen said he did not bring up the idea of hiring lobbyists in Washington to burnish Zelensky's image abroad. He said he has not seen or communicated with the Ukrainian president since.

"Cohen said he became close to Bakanov, whom he found to be smart and funny," RFE/RL wrote, adding that Bakanov did not reply to requests to comment for this story.

However, Signal Group executives and analysts who were invited to meetings with him, and others, including a senior fellow at the Cato Institute who wrote about meeting him in Washington, have confirmed Bakanov's presence along with Cohen and detailed his time in the capital last spring.

RFE/RL notes that the then head of Zelensky's campaign headquarters, Bakanov, and senior economic adviser Oleh Dubyna visited the U.S. capital from April 15 to April 17. Before they

flew back to Kyiv, they, Cohen, and around a dozen unknown others dined at the BLT Prime inside the Trump International Hotel, two blocks from the White House.

"It was sort of a coming-out event, I would say, to the West," Cohen said of their trip and the lobbying effort. "Certainly nothing dark and conspiratorial."

Media reports said earlier that U.S. lobbying firm Signal Group Consulting, LLC, filed a disclosure report with the U.S. Department of Justice on July 17 that showed work done on behalf of Zelensky in Washington between April 3 and May 21, a period of time that included the presidential runoff that Zelensky won and the day he took the oath of office.