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Elliott Broidy Pleads Guilty for Back-Channel Lobbying Campaign to Drop 1MDB Investigation and Remove a Chinese Foreign National

Elliott Broidy, 63, of Beverly Hills, California, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly to one count of conspiracy to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

“In exchange for millions of dollars, Elliott Broidy and his co-conspirators agreed to secretly do the bidding of a foreign government and a foreign national by lobbying senior U.S. government officials regarding a pending Department of Justice investigation and the extradition of a foreign national,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Brian C. Rabbitt of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division. “Although his repeated efforts to influence the administration were unsuccessful, Mr. Broidy never disclosed that he was actually acting on behalf of foreign actors. This case demonstrates how foreign governments and principals seek to advance their agendas in the United States by hiding behind politically influential proxies. Such conduct poses a serious threat to our national security and undermines the integrity of our democracy. Mr. Broidy’s failure to disclose that he was acting on behalf of foreign principals deceived the American people and prevented government officials from properly evaluating the true source of and motivation for his lobbying efforts.”

“Elliott Broidy sought to lobby the highest levels of the U.S. government to drop one of the largest fraud and money laundering prosecutions ever brought and to deport a critic of the Chinese Communist Party, all the while concealing the foreign interests whose bidding he was doing,” said Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “His guilty plea is the first step in vindicating the principle of transparency that undergirds the free flow of ideas in our democratic system.”

“The FBI is committed to rooting out corruption in whatever form it occurs,” said Assistant Director Calvin Shivers of the FBI Criminal Investigative Division. “Working with our partners at DOJ-OIG, the FBI uncovered and thwarted Elliott Broidy’s scheme to engage in illegal lobbying in exchange for millions of dollars. This case should stand as an example to all those who engage in international corruption schemes. The FBI and our partners will investigate, and we will bring you to justice.”

“Broidy worked on behalf of foreign officials to influence the Department of Justice, and in doing so, failed to disclose his lucrative relationship with the foreign officials,” said Special Agent in Charge Keith A. Bonanno of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG) Cyber Investigations Office. “Though he was unsuccessful, this case underscores the importance of protecting the integrity of DOJ investigations from foreign influence.”

According to admissions made in connection with his plea, between March 2017 and January 2018, Broidy agreed to lobby the President of the United States, the Attorney General, and other high level officials in the Administration and the Department of Justice to drop civil forfeiture proceedings and related matters concerning the embezzlement of billions of dollars from 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a strategic investment and development company wholly owned by the Government of Malaysia. For his efforts, Broidy was paid \$9 million by Foreign National A, an alleged architect of the 1MDB scheme. Broidy also agreed to lobby the Administration and DOJ on behalf of Foreign National A and People’s Republic of China (PRC) Minister A, to arrange for the removal and return of PRC National A – a dissident of the PRC living in the United States. Broidy concealed from the officials whom he lobbied that he was being paid millions of dollars by Foreign National A with the expectation of tens of millions more in success fees. The lobbying campaigns were ultimately unsuccessful.

Among other actions, Broidy tried to arrange meetings for PRC Minister A with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other high-level officials during the PRC Minister's visit to the United States in May 2017; provided talking points to the Secretary of State referencing the 1MDB investigation in advance of a meeting between the Secretary of State and the Malaysian Prime Minister in August 2017; and pushed the White House Chief of Staff for a golf game between the President and the Malaysian Prime Minister to allow the Malaysian Prime Minister to raise resolution of the 1MDB investigation. As stated previously, despite Broidy's and his co-conspirator's efforts, the lobbying campaign was unsuccessful as to the individuals mentioned above. Of the \$9 million Broidy was paid for his role in the scheme, he paid roughly \$2.4 million to co-conspirator Nickie Lum Davis. Broidy has agreed to forfeit the balance of \$6.6 million as part of his plea agreement.

George Higginbotham, a former Justice Department employee, previously pleaded guilty for his role in the scheme on Nov. 30, 2018, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Lum Davis previously pleaded guilty for her role in the scheme on Aug. 31, 2020.

Sentencing for Broidy will be set on a date to be determined.

The Los Angeles Field Division of the FBI and DOJ-OIG investigated the case. Principal Deputy Chief John D. Keller, Deputy Director of Election Crimes Sean F. Mulryne, and Trial Attorneys Nicole R. Lockhart and James C. Mann of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section (PIN) are prosecuting the case. Former PIN Trial Attorney Ryan Ellersick also provided significant assistance in the investigation.

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years.