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An ice hockey trap



Many are familiar with the KGB method known as the honey trap. How about a hockey trap?

The Soviet KGB had a long history of recruiting and using celebrities, usually famous writers, artists, journalists or athletes.

But a lot has changed since the days of the USSR. This is primarily due to the free market and open borders, which have enabled Russian agencies to explore and utilise numerous additional external options.

Famous Russians, particularly those living in the West, are a natural centre of attraction for prominent Westerners, a fact that Russian intelligence agencies intensively monitor and use for intelligence surveys and operations.

When Alexander Ovechkin **scored** the 895th goal in the National Hockey League last week, breaking Wayne Gretzky's 31-year-old record, the whole of Russia rejoiced.

"Undoubtedly, this achievement is not only your personal success but also a real celebration for fans in Russia and abroad," **wrote** Vladimir Putin, himself an ice hockey enthusiast, in a congratulatory message to the Washington Capitals star.

Russian propagandists immediately distorted Ovechkin's celebratory speech and attributed a nationalist propaganda statement to him: "The Russians did it," although the ice hockey player placed Russia (Russians) between "the whole world" and "the boys".

Strong ties with the motherland and Putin

Although Ovechkin has been playing in the NHL for 20 years, he has maintained ties to his home country and its leader. In 2017, for example, he **launched** the "PutinTeam" initiative, with which he joined other athletes and celebrities in supporting Putin's candidacy for the presidency of Russia at the time.

This earlier engagement does not fit in with

Ovechkin's later claims that he is not interested in politics, and he has never denounced this initiative.

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But to be fair to Alex, even an average NHL pro has to dedicate his entire life to the sport and leave everything else on the sidelines.

Ovechkin can sincerely believe in this "I'm not in politics" narrative. But people close to him don't have to.

For example, a close relative of Ovechkin runs a company, one of about 700 companies that are part of Rostec, the Russian state-owned enterprise and possibly the largest centralised arms manufacturing company in the world. Rostec is chaired by a KGB general and close ally of Vladimir Putin – Sergey Chemezov, who is also among the few most powerful people in Russia.

Oligarch cousin in Washington

At the historic game in which Ovechkin became the all-time leading scorer in NHL history, the head of the FBI, Kash Patel, was **spotted** with Wayne Gretzky in the VIP box. Nothing unusual, many people love ice hockey, Kash Patel could be one of them.

Where it got unusual was when the game moderator started **calling** Ovechkin's family members by name and inviting them to join Alex on the ice to celebrate the 895 milestone.

Ovechkin's father-in-law Kirill was introduced to the entire audience in the arena, and by extension the television viewers, as one of the family members invited to stand on the carpet next to Alex.

Kirill Shubsky, a close relative of Alex Ovechkin, who works at Rostec, attended the

ceremony. Kirill is not an average Russian. He stands out even among the very wealthy Russians.

Rostec is a safe haven and employer for many of those who worked in or were at least associated with the intelligence

He is a person who certainly needs special permission from the authorities to leave Russia for America because he is a high-ranking official in a very closed and scrutinised Russian organisation.

Shubsky runs a company within Rostec that, among other things, manufactures composite materials used in the production of armoured windcreens. Rostec is a major contractor to the Russian army.

He developed his first business projects in collaboration with Soviet state institutions, which gave him access to infrastructure, support, and opportunities.

Even in the late 1980s, he was in the orbit of the Ministry of Defence. In the early days of privatisation in Russia, Shubsky secured the Soviet trade and fishing fleet, which allowed him to enter businesses that earned him large amounts of hard currency. This was the time when owning foreign currency was still illegal for the average citizen.

Rostec is generally a safe haven and employer for many of those who worked in or were at least associated with the intelligence.

Hockey as a cover

It is therefore only logical that while Alex Ovechkin was pursuing historic scores, his father-in-law, Kirill Shubsky, was on a mission in Washington.

Was he able to get acquainted with Kash Patel during the game while sitting in the VIP box? Did Kirill meet other important people in

Washington after the game?

Kirill Shubsky certainly wished he had. Perhaps that's precisely why he came to Washington. If so, what could his agenda be?



The head of Rostec, Sergey Chemezov (left) has been under Western sanctions since 2014, and he cannot travel himself, but he can certainly send his envoy

These kinds of Russian operations usually have multiple overt and covert agendas. They could be anything from seemingly innocent initiatives between Russia and America to rare-earth minerals that are currently preoccupying the Trump administration to something like military or space cooperation.

The head of Rostec, Sergey Chemezov, is not only an extremely powerful Russian who controls many companies and even industries, but he originally comes from a Soviet geological mining institute dealing with rare-earth minerals.

Chemezov has been under Western **sanctions** since 2014, and he cannot travel himself, but he can certainly send his envoy, perhaps Kirill Shubsky.

For Kirill Shubsky, it could have been a networking operation or simply "combat intelligence", a Russian military term describing activities carried out before the main operation.

Shubsky's superiors may have wanted to wait for the Americans' reaction, as the American secret services certainly knew Kirill's background.

Nevertheless, we can be sure that Kirill Shubsky did not come to Washington just to watch a hockey game. Hockey was just a convenient cover story. Alex Ovechkin was both an attraction and a destructive force in Shubsky's mission.

Alex Ovechkin may not be interested in politics, but some components of politics and intelligence are interested in him because he attracts too many important Americans, including Kash Patel.