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Daring CIA ops, a nasty scar and White House ties: Lawsuit claims a 'fake spy' wove epic fantasy to steal a \$350M oil firm

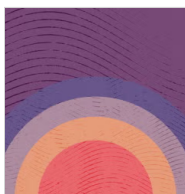
Exclusive: Gaurav Srivastava "is not a CIA operative and never has been," an attorney for sanctioned Dutch oil trader Niels Troost told *The Independent*. "He's not even a U.S. citizen. He's simply a fraud."

Justin Rohrllich

Thursday 22 January 2026 13:08 GMT



Oil trader Niels Troost (top) has filed a lawsuit against businessman Gaurav Srivastava (below left with Vice President JD Vance; and right with former President Joe Biden) (Provided/Marco Serventi; US District Court for the Central District of California)



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When Niels Troost first met **Gaurav Srivastava**, he thought his problems were solved.

The Dutch-born oil trader, who dealt for years in Russian crude, was facing potential U.S. sanctions after Vladimir Putin's 2022 **invasion of Ukraine**. Srivastava, an Indian businessman living in California, said he was uniquely positioned to help.

Srivastava let Troost in on a secret: he was actually a deep-cover **CIA operative**, using his business activities as a front, and regaled him with personal tales of international intrigue and derring-do.

The thirty-something businessman spoke of his training at "the Farm," the CIA's Virginia compound, showed off scars from a covert mission, and described being held hostage by ISIS in 2008 during an operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

To cement his bona fides, Srivastava shared photos of himself with political and military heavyweights, from **President Joe Biden** to former **NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Wesley Clark**.

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Once a major donor to Democrats, 'fake spy' Gaurav Srivastava, seen here with Vice President JD Vance at a political convention in June 2025, has since cozied up to the Trump administration (*New York State Supreme Court*)

But the amazing stories Srivastava recounted were made up out of whole cloth, Troost alleges in a **RICO** lawsuit filed Wednesday. The suit alleges that Srivastava was never in the CIA. It says that his “battle scars” in fact came from a childhood kidney operation and that his ISIS kidnapping could not have happened because the terrorist organization “did not operate in the DRC in 2008, nor did any ISIS-affiliated group exist in that region at that time.”

In his new **RICO complaint**, Troost claims Srivastava was a “fake spy” who fabricated his work for the CIA as part of an attempt to steal Troost’s \$350 million company. Srivastava was after the money, in part, to purchase a **\$24.5 million California mansion**, complete with bocce court, orchard, and bomb shelter-cum-wine cave, according to Troost’s complaint.

“For more than five years, defendant Gaurav Srivastava led a criminal enterprise that stole and extorted tens of millions of dollars from plaintiffs and other victims based upon the false over-arching narrative that Srivastava was a high-level non-official cover operative for the CIA,” the complaint alleges.

“Srivastava and the other members of the enterprise defrauded victims by convincing them that Srivastava controlled the might of the United States Government and could provide invaluable assistance to his allies and destroy those that dared to cross him. That was all a complete fiction. Srivastava is not a CIA operative—or an agent of any other U.S. federal agency – and never has been. He’s not even a U.S. citizen. He’s simply a fraud.”

Today, Troost's company is in liquidation, the complaint reveals.

Attorney Jason Masimore, a former federal prosecutor who is representing Troost, told *The Independent*: "The complaint and supporting evidence expose a massive criminal conspiracy orchestrated in the U.S. by its ringleader, Gaurav Srivastava."



Oil trader Niels Troost, seen here in his Geneva office, was forced to liquidate his company following his ill-fated partnership with 'fake spy' Gaurav Srivastava, according to a new lawsuit (Provided/Marco Serventi)

Srivastava was only able to pull off the alleged scheme thanks to a raft of people helping him - willing lawyers, bankers, and former intelligence operatives, according to Masimore, who claimed the plot compromised U.S. national security and top-level political leadership.



“Mr. Troost and his companies seek to hold the defendants accountable for their reprehensible conduct,” Masimore said.

The lawsuit is the latest salvo in a **long-running saga** between the two men, roping in **members of the intelligence community**, U.S. **senators**, foreign government officials, and even pop star **John Legend**.

It is the first suit to name Srivastava personally as a defendant. Previous lawsuits have taken on Srivastava’s alleged enablers including a corporate intelligence and crisis communications firm, run by influential CIA veterans, who Troost says conducted an ugly smear campaign against him on behalf of his former business partner.

Srivastava did not reply to messages seeking comment sent to his personal and business emails, nor did his attorney. The Arkin Group, who Troost is suing separately for defamation, also did not respond. (Masimore also has his own defamation lawsuit against Srivastava pending in federal court.)

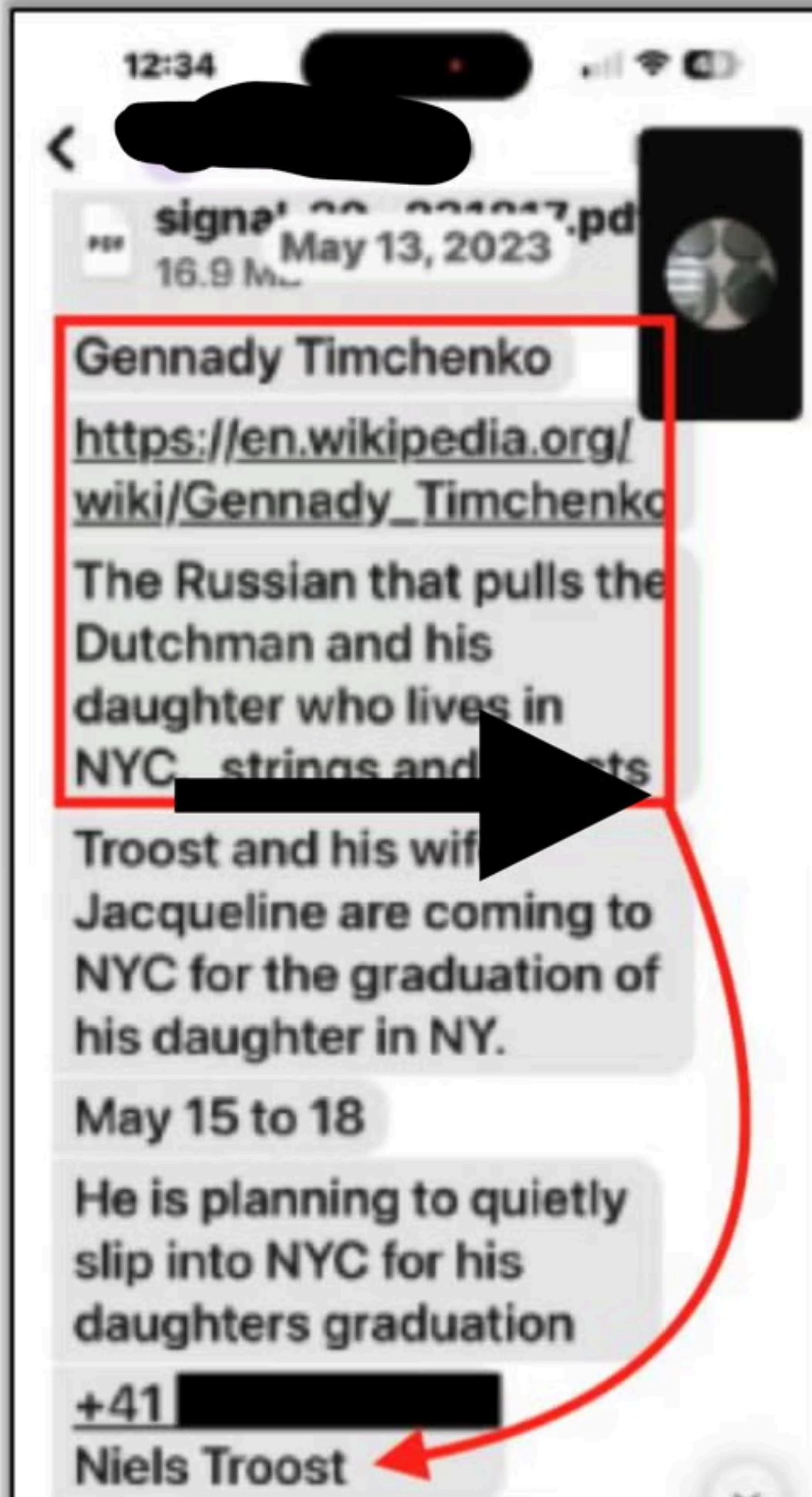
Troost’s lawsuit against Arkin, which was removed a few weeks ago from federal court to New York State Supreme Court, noted that the case “may have the hallmarks of a Hollywood film – fake spies, theft, and deceit,” but that at its core, the allegations against Srivastava were really “quite simple.”

In response, Arkin claimed that Srivastava “did not work for the CIA, does not work for the CIA, and never claimed that he worked for the CIA.”

In his new RICO complaint, filed in Los Angeles federal court, Troost lays out a raft of explosive accusations against Srivastava, who was once described by *The Wall Street Journal* as “**part Austin Powers, part James Bond.**”

While Srivastava has denied posing as a spy, Troost’s lawsuit includes transcripts of phone calls in which he says he is a clandestine operative under “**non-official cover.**”







Gaurav Srivastava's alleged smear campaign against oil trader Niels Troost included threats against his son and daughter, according to a lawsuit filed by Troost on Wednesday (New York State Supreme Court)

“For years, [Srivastava] had perfected the same elaborate ruse: present himself as a covert CIA officer, fabricate intelligence missions, and use those staged ‘operations’ to extract money, access, and influence,” Troost’s complaint states.

It claims Srivastava has previously duped, variously, a Ugandan businessman and honorary consul to **Malaysia**, Sudanese government officials, and actual American spies.



A longtime commodities trader, **Troost had made a fortune buying and selling Russian oil** over decades. However, when Russia launched its war against Ukraine four years ago, an associate who owed money to Troost threatened to ruin his reputation by spreading false rumors that he was working for the **Kremlin**, according to the complaint.

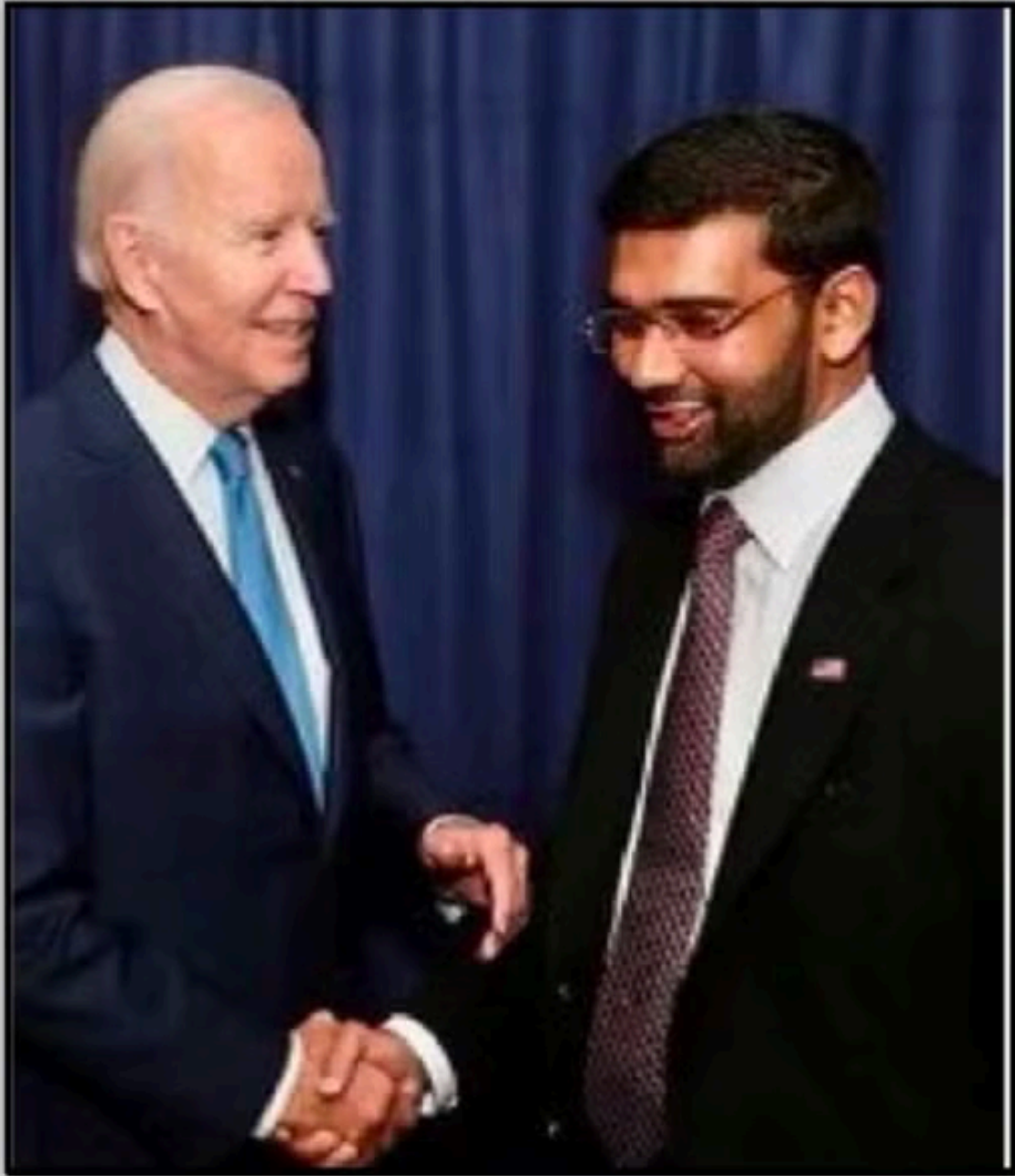
Troost, who is **under European sanctions related to the conflict**, says he dealt with small-scale, independent Russian oil producers and not state entities. But he turned to a contact for help, who advised him to get in touch with an individual known as “Mr. G,” the complaint goes on.

“Mr. G” turned out to be Srivastava, who told Troost he could “ensure that the debtor stopped bothering” him and squelch whatever negative information he might be planning to disseminate. Srivastava said he oversaw a CIA “Program” monitoring Russian oil flows, and that he could also ensure Troost’s company, Paramount Energy & Commodities, would be permitted to continue trading Russian oil even under increasingly severe restrictions imposed by the U.S. Treasury.

Another prospective business partner had once before convinced Troost that he was with the CIA, and Srivastava had homed in on what the complaint calls the 56-year-old Dutchman’s “critical weak spot – his lingering tolerance for dubious claims.”

Once Srivastava got Troost onboard, the oil trader truly believed he was part of a secret CIA operation, the complaint continues. Srivastava said all the right things, and appeared to be connected at the highest levels of government. He talked about close working relationships with Biden and **then-VP Kamala Harris**, as well as **National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan** and **Senator Chuck Schumer**, according to the complaint.





Gaurav Srivastava, seen here with President Biden, presented himself as a deep-cover CIA operative with high-level contacts, but former business partner Niels Troost has filed a RICO lawsuit alleging his erstwhile colleague is a fraud (*US District Court for the Central District of California*)

The complaint says Srivastava boasted of a weapons deal with an unnamed North African country so the CIA could spy on the **Wagner Group**, the Russian private military organization, and that he told Troost he used his CIA imprimatur to get then-Indonesian Defense Minister **Prabowo Subianto** – now president – removed from a U.S. no-entry list.

In July 2022, Srivastava convinced Troost to sell him half of Paramount at a deep discount, insisting the arrangement “was necessary to avoid U.S. sanctions and ensure government support for continued Russian oil trading,” the complaint states. Troost’s other partners were gravely concerned that he was getting swindled, but Troost assured them that it was all backed by the White House.

That November, Srivastava delivered the keynote address at an event in Bali held by the Atlantic Council. It was sponsored by **Srivastava's family foundation**, and he was publicly lauded from the dais by Rep. Pat Ryan, a member of the House Committee on Armed Services. The confab's entertainment, singer-songwriter John Legend, took the stage and thanked "Mr. G" for making his appearance possible.

As the West continued to turn the screws on Russia's oil industry, Troost began getting cold feet about continuing to do business there, the complaint says. That's when Srivastava began pressuring Troost to re-domicile Paramount in the U.S., so the supposed undercover program could continue, the complaint states.

In December 2022, Srivastava had Troost transfer \$51 million from a Paramount subsidiary to an Indonesian firm, which he framed as a loan for ongoing operations, the complaint continues. Through complex transactions allegedly designed to foil regulators, the complaint says Srivastava soon funneled \$25 million to himself so he could buy a **Pacific Palisades** mansion.

Srivastava allegedly drained additional millions from Paramount's coffers by having Troost send large payments to various entities, such as a law firm he claimed was associated with former-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, but was actually run by a California lawyer suspended from practice after a 2011 federal narcotics conviction.

As 2023 began, Srivastava hired a retired U.S. Army Delta Force operator as his chief of staff. He kitted out an LA office with Paramount's money, mimicking the look of a federal government workspace.



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'Fake spy' Gaurav Srivastava set up Paramount's LA offices to look like a US government workspace, complete with personalized ceremonial swords he claimed had been gifted to him by foreign government officials but that he himself had in fact ordered and had engraved, court filings allege (*US District Court for the Central District of California*)

“The office displayed the Great Seal of the United States and custom-engraved ceremonial swords bearing Srivastava’s name – objects he falsely claimed were gifts from senior government officials, but that he, himself, had ordered and engraved,” the complaint states.

After one of Paramount’s directors spotted a news article about the Palisades mansion – which Srivastava had reportedly beaten several A-list celebrities to attain – Troost became suspicious. He hired an investigator who unearthed a history of fraud by Srivastava, with accusations ranging from pilfering \$100,000 worth of wine to bouncing six-figure checks, the complaint says.

Even the **Atlantic Council** sponsorship had been financed with money stolen from Paramount, the complaint alleges.

In May 2023, Troost confronted Srivastava, who responded that the Dutchman “ha[d] no f***ing idea” what he was capable of, the complaint says.

If Troost didn't finish re-domiciling Paramount to the states, Srivastava vowed to tell U.S. authorities that Troost was a Russian agent, get him sanctioned, and have Paramount's **assets**  blocked, according to the complaint.

By now, Troost "finally decided he'd had enough," the complaint states. On May 10, 2023, Troost rescinded Srivastava's stake in Paramount, citing "intentional deceit." In response, Srivastava immediately tried to steal the remaining \$26 million held by the Indonesian firm but was foiled, according to the complaint.

Srivastava "reacted with anger," and "launched an aggressive and malicious smear campaign... which continues to this date," according to the complaint.

Srivastava hired the New York City-based **Arkin Group**, founded and headed by **Jack Devine**, the CIA's former chief of worldwide operations, and **Carol "Rollie" Flynn**, former director of the CIA's Office of Foreign Intelligence Relationships, who paid to have "fabricated stories" published about Troost, the complaint contends.











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Gracious Palisades Estate With Its Own Bomb Shelter Sells for \$24 Million

By James McClain March 10, 2023 9:46 pm PT



Ryan Lahiff; PR Newswire/Harvest Commodities

 Seller	Rita DeLeone	 Year	1952; rebuilt 2012
 Buyer	Gaurav & Sharon Srivastava	 Architect	Marc Appleton
 Location	Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, Calif.	 Specs	Multiple structures totaling 10,000 square feet, 7 bedrooms, 11 bathrooms
 Price	\$24.5 million	 Lot Size	1.12 acres

 8

Gaurav Srivastava is accused of posing as a CIA operative to pilfer millions from then-business partner Niels Troost, using some of the stolen funds to purchase a multi-million-dollar Los Angeles mansion (*US District Court for the Central District of California*)

“Together, they generated and promoted articles alleging that Troost had criminal ties to Russia, including claims that he acted as a front for a sanctioned Russian oligarch,” it reads.

One article, published in May 2023 on a thinly-read blog, stated: “Troost, at Putin’s urging, is one of the largest clandestine funders of the Wagner Group,” and that “Troost, simply put, is the ringleader of a global covert criminal enterprise.”

Another accused Troost’s daughter of being part of an international crime ring, and Srivastava sent emails from fake journalists to Troost’s son’s university in the UK, trying to get him kicked out, the complaint says.

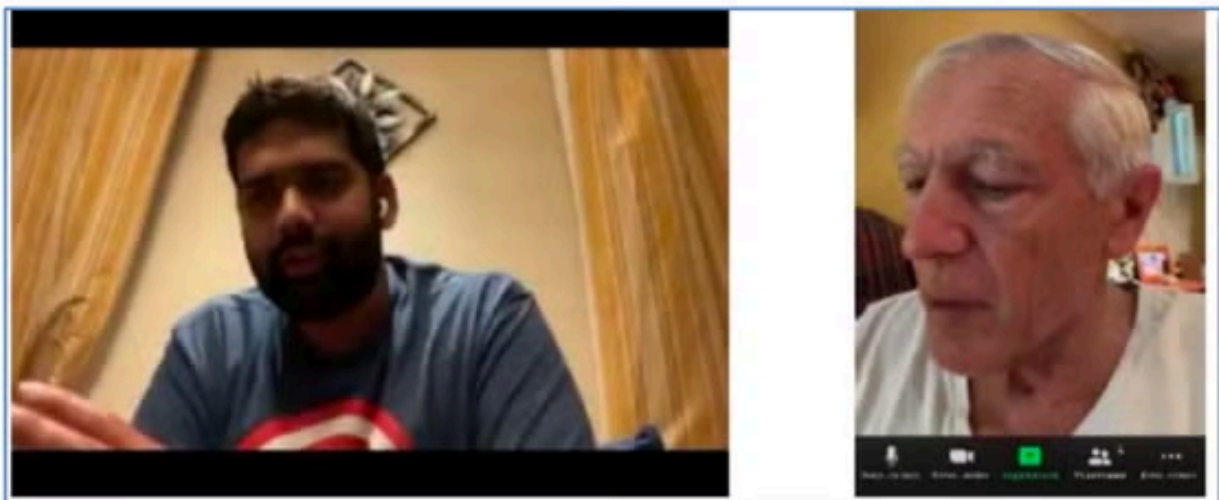
Srivastava also used Arkin to push a narrative claiming Troost had fabricated the story about him claiming to be in the CIA, painting him as a liar not to be trusted, according to the complaint.

For their part, The Arkin Group and Srivastava argued in a past court filing, from a separate but related lawsuit, that Troost is “an astonishingly credulous mark” who once before fell for an identical story from another “fake spy.” They said it was not Srivastava who sank Troost, but the Dutchman’s own “profound and ruinous gullibility.”

In August 2024, *The Wall Street Journal* published a lengthy and painstakingly-researched article about Srivastava which picked apart his spy claims and “dismantled his public persona,” according to Troost’s complaint. Srivastava bought access to the politicians he boasted of knowing, via donations, according to the complaint. And former NATO commander Clark **told** *Politico* that his work with Srivastava ended after 10 months, because he never got paid.

An exposé followed in the *Financial Times*, which the complaint says prompted Srivastava to alter his tactics in a bid to “rebuild political influence.”

“After long aligning with Democratic figures, Srivastava shifted toward Republican circles following his exposure,” the complaint states. “He appeared on conservative podcasts. He presented a speech to a conservative audience at a political convention in Las Vegas. And, in June 2025, he even posted a photograph with Vice President J.D. Vance, claiming to be working with him.”



Former NATO commander Gen. Wesley Clark, seen here videoconferencing with Gaurav Srivastava, said he ended his working relationship with the 'fake spy' after not getting paid (*US District Court for the Central District of California*)

In August 2025, [Srivastava spoke at the America First-Ground Zero conference](#) in Las Vegas, where he was introduced by right-wing podcaster and conspiracy theorist Lara Logan.

“Through his prominent appearance at the conference, as well as recent efforts to infiltrate those close to the current administration, Srivastava was continuing his enterprise, attempting to fortify its reputation, and trying to meet and impress wealthy potential new victims,” according to the complaint.

Between late 2023 and 2025, Troost was sanctioned by the UK, the [EU](#), and Switzerland, the complaint says, adding: “Srivastava has publicly taken credit for causing this.” (Troost has not been sanctioned to date by the U.S., which requires a higher standard of evidence, according to the complaint.)

In the aftermath, Paramount was forced to shutter. Both men have set up dueling websites devoted to exposing their accusations against one another.

Srivastava, whose wife has since left him, according to Troost’s new complaint, has since “engaged in at least two additional schemes in which [he] once again posed as a well-connected CIA ‘NOC’ to pursue profit and influence.”

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Troost’s suit seeks the return of all funds “wrongfully obtained” by Srivastava, plus compensatory, punitive, and treble damages, as well as court costs and attorneys’ fees.

Srivastava has not yet formally responded to Troost’s allegations.

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