

US Commerce Secretary Says He Will Likely Sell Stake in Russian Energy Company with Ties to Putin and the Kremlin

By Hilarie Bellis, J.D. Candidate 2019 | November 13, 2017

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross says he will likely not [maintain his stake](#) in Navigator Holdings, a shipping company that does business with a Russian energy company. Ross has as much as \$10 million invested in Navigator Holdings. One of Navigator's clients includes the Russian energy company SIBUR, which is owned by Putin's son-in-law along with sanctioned Russian oligarch [Gennady Timchenko](#), who reportedly has ties close to the Kremlin.

The Commerce Secretary is [criticizing reports](#) that say he did not disclose his business ties with Navigator Holdings. The ties were first revealed in the [Paradise Papers](#), which were leaked to a German newspaper on November 5, 2017. Ross says he disclosed three times on his form 278 that he had an interest in Navigator Holdings. However, it appears that billionaire banker Ross failed to disclose that Navigator Holdings conducted business with SIBUR.

In an interview with Bloomberg TV, Ross denied that Navigator Holdings had ties to Russians under sanctions; Ross further stated that he was not involved with Navigator's negotiations with SIBUR, but that there was nothing wrong with having a business relationship with the Russian energy company. SIBUR appears to be Navigator's [second-largest client](#).

Ross argued that he does not have a duty to disclose Navigator's relationship with SIBUR because he is not an officer, director, or investor of the Russian energy company. He further stated that a company without sanctions is the same as any other company. However, Timchenko, one of the owners of SIBUR, has been barred from entering the United States by the Treasury Department since 2014.

Senator Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who is part of the Senate Commerce Committee, says Ross was [misleading](#) by not disclosing Navigator Holdings' ties to Russia. Senator Blumenthal said that he will call for the Commerce Department to investigate Navigator's relationship with SIBUR.

The Commerce Secretary says he is [planning on selling](#) his stake in Navigator Holdings, but his reasons for selling are not because of the controversy surrounding the company's ties with SIBUR.