

BUSINESS

Trump company strikes Qatari golf resort deal in a sign it's not holding back from foreign business



BY [BERNARD CONDON](#)

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The Trump family company struck a deal Wednesday to build a luxury golf resort in [Qatar](#) in a sign it has no plans to hold back from [foreign dealmaking during a second Trump administration](#), despite the danger of a president shaping U.S. public policy for personal financial gain.

The project, which features Trump-branded beachside villas and an 18-hole golf course to be built by a Saudi Arabian company, is the first foreign deal by the Trump Organization since [Donald Trump](#) took office and unlike any done in his first term. Back then, he forswore foreign deals in an extraordinary press conference surrounded by stacks of legal documents as he pledged to avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest.

Noah Bookbinder, president of a watchdog group that has sued Trump for alleged ethics violations, blasted the Qatari deal.

"You want a president making decisions that are in the best interest of the United States, not his bottom line," said Bookbinder, who leads Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

In addition to a Saudi Arabian partner, called Dar Global, the planned resort north of the Qatari capital of Doha will be developed by a Qatari company called Qatari Diar, which is owned by the Qatari government.

That would appear to violate the Trump Organization's much weaker, second-term ethics pledge that, while it would pursue foreign deals, none would include foreign governments.

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When asked for clarification, the Trump Organization said its deal was with the Saudi firm, not the Qatari one, though Trump's son Eric, who is in charge of the business, mentioned both companies in an earlier statement.

"We are incredibly proud to expand the Trump brand into Qatar through this exceptional collaboration with Qatari Diar and Dar Global," he said.

The deal Wednesday for the Trump International Golf Club and Trump Villas is unlikely to be the last of its kind. It follows several other deals made before Trump was sworn in, including one for a golf resort in Vietnam late last year with a firm with ties to the Communist Party.

The deals have drawn outrage from government watchdogs but mostly silence from Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress.

The Associated Press reached out to the two Republicans who chair the foreign relations committees in the Senate and House, Sen. James Risch of Idaho and Rep. Brian Mast of Florida, but neither responded.

Any deal with Saudi Arabia is seen as especially problematic in foreign policy circles. Trump's close ties to Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, drew heavy criticism in his first term after the 2018 killing of [Jamal Khashoggi](#), a Saudi columnist for The Washington Post who had written critically about the monarchy.

Khashoggi is believed to have been dismembered, a killing that the [U.S. intelligence community](#) concluded was approved by the crown prince.

The deal on Wednesday with the Saudi firm Dar Global, a London-based international arm of developer Dar Al Arkan, follows deals with it for [two Riyadh projects](#) in December. Dar Global is not owned by the Saudi government, but it has close ties to the royal Saudi family.

Another government tie to Trump is through his son-in-law Jared Kushner. The Saudi sovereign wealth fund has reportedly invested \$2 billion in an investment fund run by Kushner. And the Saudi government-backed LIV Golf has hosted tournaments at Trump's Doral resort near Miami.

Despite Trump's pledge in his first term to not make moves that would appear to conflict with his personal financial holdings and business, he ended up opening the doors to all sorts of potential pay-to-play deals. His hotel down the street from the White House hosted scores of corporate lobbyists, CEOs, members of Congress and diplomats. Trump [once suggested](#) holding a G7 meeting of global leaders at Doral before he [backed down](#) after an outcry over ethics concerns.

Several lawsuits were filed against the first Trump administration, alleging it violated the emoluments clause of the U.S. Constitution, which bans a president from accepting gifts or payments from foreign or domestic governments. One case was appealed to the Supreme Court but was never heard because Trump had already left the presidency at that point and the issue was moot.

This time, the hotel is gone, sold to a Miami investment firm, but other sources of potential conflicts of interest have emerged.

The Trump Organization also owns much of the publicly traded parent company of social media platform Truth Social, which allows Trump to financially benefit from traffic to the site where his postings as U.S. president are widely followed. The family also has a stake in a cryptocurrency trading platform called World Liberty Financial as Trump has pushed for less regulatory oversight on cryptocurrencies.

**BERNARD CONDON**

Condon is an Associated Press investigative reporter covering breaking news. He has written about the Maui fire, the Afghanistan withdrawal, gun laws, Chinese loans in Africa and Trump's business.





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