

Brother of Hillary Clinton's Top Campaign Aide Lobbied for Fracked Gas Export Terminal Co-Owned by Qatar

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Global Research, May 02, 2015

[DeSmogBlog](#)

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Anthony "Tony" Podesta began lobbying in late 2013 on behalf of a company co-owned by ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum aiming to export [liquefied natural gas \(LNG\)](#) to the global market. Tony is the brother of John Podesta, former top climate change adviser to President Barack Obama and current [top campaign aide for Hillary Clinton's 2016 bid for president](#).

[In October 2012](#), Podesta Group began lobbying on behalf of the [proposed ExxonMobil-Qatar Petroleum Golden Pass LNG facility](#) in Sabine Pass, Texas, according to lobbying disclosure forms. The forms indicate that Tony Podesta himself, not just his staff, lobbied on behalf of the terminal [beginning in quarter four of 2013](#).

Tony Podesta's name also shows up on the [Golden Pass LNG](#) lobbying disclosure forms for quarters [one](#), [two](#), [three](#) and [four](#) for 2014. During those quarters, Podesta lobbied for proposed federal legislation aiming to expedite the regulatory process for permitting LNG terminals.



Image Credit: [Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives](#)

[Lobbying disclosure forms](#) for the first quarter of 2015 show that Podesta Group no longer lobbies on behalf of Golden Pass.

The company now employs [FTI Consulting's Timothy Glassco](#) to lobby for expedited permitting for LNG export terminals. Glassco, a former staffer for Obama's 2008 presidential run, recently departed after almost seven years on the job at Podesta Group, according to his [LinkedIn profile](#).

Glassco has lobbied for Golden Pass since the Podesta Group began lobbying for the company back in 2012, according to the federal lobbying disclosure database.



Image Credit: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives

FTI Consulting may ring a bell for some since one of its employees, [Chris Tucker](#), manages the [fracking front group Energy in Depth](#).

The Tony Podesta-Golden Pass example serves as an influence peddling and lobbying case

study akin to many others unpacked in the DeSmogBlog-Republic Report November 2014 report titled, "[Natural Gas Exports: Washington's Revolving Door Fuels Climate Threat](#)."

Qatar, the Persian Gulf country which shares a border with Saudi Arabia, is the [top exporter of LNG in the world](#). It has also [come under fire for human rights abuses](#) and for maintaining one of the [most long-standing dictatorships on the planet](#).

The Clinton Foundation, whose [finances are currently under increased scrutiny](#) due to the looming release of the book "[Clinton Cash](#)," took between [\\$250,000-\\$500,000 from Qatar in 2014](#).

Expedited LNG Export Permitting

Podesta Group's lobbying for expedited permitting for LNG export terminals paid dividends.

During the same quarter Tony Podesta began lobbying for Golden Pass, [President Obama hired John Podesta](#) in December 2013 as his top counselor on climate change and energy issues.

On March 19, 2014, National Journal reported that [John Podesta attended a White House roundtable on methane emissions](#) occurring during the [hydraulic fracturing \("fracking"\)](#) process. At that meeting, John Podesta strongly critiqued the environmental movement for its activism against fracking.

"If you oppose all fossil fuels and you want to turn that switch off tomorrow, that is a completely impractical way of moving toward a clean-energy future," [John Podesta told reporters at the roundtable](#). "With all due respect to my friends in the environmental community, if they expect us to turn off the lights and go home, that's sort of an impractical suggestion."

The harshly-worded John Podesta critique came a day after groups such as the Sierra Club, 350.org, Friends of the Earth, Food and Water Watch and others [wrote a March 18 letter to the White House](#) asking it to slow down the permitting process for LNG exports. He [declined to comment on the LNG exports issue](#) at the roundtable, according to Politico.

John Podesta told DeSmogBlog that he was simply explaining the Obama Administration's policy when he made his remarks.

"My comments on natural gas reflect general Administration policy with respect to natural gas that was established before I joined the White House staff and continues subsequent to my departure," he said.

Just two months later in May, [DOE announced it would begin streamlining](#) the permitting process for LNG export terminals [with the highest chance of receiving a permit](#).

White House Meetings

White House meeting logs show that Tony Podesta met many times with the White House while lobbying for Golden Pass Products.

On March 26, 2014, a week after John Podesta made his remarks about the environmental

movement and fracking, Tony had a meeting with the White House. On April 4 and August 4, the logs show, Tony Podesta met with John Podesta in the White House.

During his time spent lobbying for Golden Pass LNG, [Tony Podesta had ten White House meetings](#), according to the logs.

John Podesta denied any knowledge of the project proposal when asked about it by DeSmogBlog and did not comment on the content of the White House meetings with Tony. Tony also did not comment on the content of the meetings.

"I don't believe I have ever heard of the project you mentioned and have never taken any action on it or any other specific LNG project," John Podesta told DeSmogBlog.

"I had no knowledge that the Podesta Group represented Golden Pass, if indeed they did, and have certainly never discussed it with anyone associated with the Podesta Group, nor have I had any discussions with anyone from the Podesta Group concerning natural gas policy."

Though he lobbied for Golden Pass for over a year according to the lobbying disclosure records, Tony Podesta told DeSmogBlog that he only ever held one meeting on the topic with a policymaker.

"I did one meeting in one senate office and the Senator was against our position," he said in an email. "Never spoke to anyone in the executive branch."

Asked why he registered as a lobbyist for Golden Pass for five straight quarters if he only had a single meeting with one Senate office's staff, he said, "Thanks for pointing out. Filing amendments."

Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist for Public Citizen and an expert on lobbying disclosure law, told DeSmogBlog he finds Podesta's remarks hard to believe.

"If Podesta spent 15 months conducting lobbying activity on Golden Pass, but made only one lobbying contact on the issue in the entire period, that would be a very inefficient means of lobbying," said Holman.

"Fifteen months of lobbying activity with only a single lobbying contact, while technically possible, would seem wasteful at best, and more likely not what was really going on. In this particular case, if Podesta amends his report [in such a way as he described], the client might be quite surprised to see him declaring no lobbying activity to the public for which the client was billed each quarter."

Glassco, White House officials, and Golden Pass LNG officials did not respond to multiple requests for comment from DeSmogBlog.

"History of Supporting Natural Gas"

[Wenonah Hauter](#), director of the [Food & Water Watch Fund](#), pointed to the longer arc of history of John Podesta and both the Clinton and Obama Administrations supporting shale gas production when she reviewed the results of DeSmogBlog's investigation.

"John Podesta has had a long history of touting natural gas, including when he was Chief of

Staff to Bill Clinton and more recently as an advisor to Obama on the ‘all of the above’ energy strategy,” said Hauter.

“And during her tenure as Secretary of State, [Hillary Clinton promoted fracking throughout the world](#) [via the State Department’s [Global Shale Gas Initiative](#)]. So, unless there is a huge grassroots movement among Clinton’s base to reverse her position, she will continue to advance fracked natural gas as the solution to climate change.”

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