The financial trail of former Rocket investor Timur Rokhlin: 400 Europeans deceived and €10 million funneled through an offshore network

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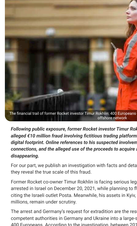

The financial trail of former Rocket investor Timur Rokhlin: 400 Europeans deceived and €10 million funneled through an offshore network

Following public exposure, former Rocket investor Timur Rokhlin, who has been linked to an alleged €10 million fraud involving fictitious trading platforms, reportedly began clearing his digital footprint. Online references to his suspected involvement in the scheme, international connections, and the alleged use of the proceeds to acquire assets in Ukraine are gradually disappearing.

For our part, we publish an investigation with facts and details that are being concealed — as they reveal the true scale of this fraud.

Former Rocket co-owner Timur Rokhlin is facing serious legal and financial troubles. He was arrested in Israel on December 20, 2021, while planning to fly to Kyiv, as reported by dou.ua citing the Israel called Ynita. Meanwhile, his assets in Kyiv, reportedly worth hundreds of millions, remain under scrutiny.

The arrest and Germany's request for extradition are the result of a two-year investigation by competent authorities in Germany and Ukraine into a large-scale scam that affected around 400 Europeans. According to the investigation, between 2017 and 2020, they invested approximately 10 million euros in financial products that did not exist. German investigators claim that Timur Rokhlin was at the helm of the scheme, and the sums defrauded from "investors" passed through his British company. Ukrainian law enforcement is currently investigating the possibility that these funds were used to purchase luxury cars and real estate in Ukraine.

As part of the investigation, courts have already imposed arrests on some Ukrainian assets linked to the businessman, including cars and real estate properties. The sanctions did not affect the Rocket delivery service. As a reminder, in 2019, Timur Rokhlin acquired a controlling stake in the group discount service Pokupon. Forbes magazine wrote that with this move, Rokhlin saved Rocket from "ending up in the startup graveyard." The current 100% investor in Rocket is Timur's father, Israel citizen Ruvi Rokhlin. The son relinquished his position to his father in 2020, at a time when the prosecutor's office in Bamberg, Germany, was already conducting its investigation.

Nevertheless, Rocket has started to face turbulence. According to information from the website Ain.ua, between December 2021 and January 2022, Rocket significantly reduced its staff in Ukraine—over 50 people. The main reason for this step is reportedly a decrease in funding from the investor at the end of the year, which came as a surprise to the management.

How is Timur Rokhlin connected to Rocket?

In 2019, Timur became the majority owner of the delivery service, which was then still called "Raketa." He bought it from Ukraine's largest coupon service, Pokupon, as reported by Forbes. The minority shareholders were the developers of "Raketa"—Oleksiy Yakhymchuk and Stanislav Dmytryk (75 each). Later, the ownership structure changed. In April 2020, when the fraud investigation was already underway, and in December, assets belonging to Igor Rokhlin were seized, Timur exited the company, and founders Yakhymchuk and Dmytryk left in August of the same year. Currently, the registry lists the founder of "Rocket Delivery" as the company Tawa Fresh Food Ltd, with the ultimate owner being Timur's father, Igor Rokhlin.

In response to a request from LIGA.net, Rocket stated that Timur Rokhlin has no connection to the company.

Little is known about the Rokhlins. A Forbes article from early 2021 mentions that Ihor Rokhlin graduated from the Baku Institute of Oil and Chemistry and has been an Israeli citizen since 2005. Media outlets wrote about him when he was a member of the board of directors of the Romanian oil refinery RAFO Onesti, which was sold in 2006 to Russian businessman Yakov Goldovsky, who later resold it to Moldovan businessman.

Timur Rokhlin, a citizen of both Ukraine and Israel, graduated from the Rotterdam School of Management. He moved to Ukraine a few years ago. Forbes notes that at the beginning of 2021, in addition to Rocket, Timur owned the coworking space BeerWorking, the venture fund BeeVentures, and several IT businesses. He also owned a car fleet at that time, which included a Rolls-Royce Wraith valued at approximately $500,000.

Why was Rokhlin detained?

In mid-November, on her Facebook page, Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova posted photos of two cars—a Lamborghini Aventador SJV and a Rolls-Royce Phantom, with a total value exceeding 1 million euros. At Boryspil Airport, they were being loaded into the cargo hold of an An-12 before being sent to Germany. The Prosecutor General clarified that the images showed the process of transferring "evidence" to German authorities in a case involving a large-scale international fraud scheme related to investments in nonexistent financial products.

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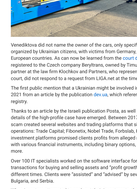

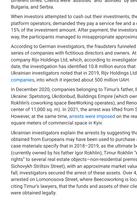

Venediktova did not name the owner of the cars, only specifying that the fraud scheme was organized by Ukrainian citizens, with victims from Germany, Bulgaria, Serbia, and other European countries. As can now be learned from the court decisions registry, these cars are registered to the Czech company Berlytans, owned by Timur Rokhlin. Ivan Starosta, a senior partner at the law firm Klochkov and Partners, who represented Timur Rokhlin's interests in court, did not respond to a request from LIGA.net at the time of publication.

The first public mention that a Ukrainian might be involved in the same case in September 2021 from an article by the publication den.ua, which referenced materials from the court registry.

Thanks to an article by the Israeli publication Posta, as well as data from the court registry, details of the high-profile case have emerged. Between 2017 and 2020, the organizers of the scam created several websites and trading platforms that simulated stock market operations: Trade Capital, Fibonetix, Nobel Trade, Forbistik, Hubultec. These sites promised investment platforms promised clients profits from alleged real trades on the stock market with various financial instruments, including binary options, currency, cryptocurency, and more.

Over 100 IT specialists worked on the software interface for the websites, which simulated transactions for buying and selling assets and "profit growth from invested funds," at different times. Clients were "assisted" and "advised" by several "call centers" in Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Serbia.

When investors attempted to cash out their investments, the fraudsters, posing as trading platform operators, demanded they pay a service fee and a commission for cashing out—15% of the investment amount. After payment, the investors' accounts were blocked. In this way, the participants managed to misappropriate approximately 10 million euros.

According to German investigators, the fraudsters funneled the obtained sums through a series of companies with fictitious directors and owners. At the end of the chain was the company Rijv Holdings Ltd, which, according to investigators, is linked to Timur Rokhlin. To date, the investigation has identified 10.8 million euros that passed through this company. Ukrainian investigators noted that in 2019, Rijv Holdings Ltd became the founder of several companies, into which it injected about 500 million UAH.

In December 2020, companies belonging to Timur's father, Ihor Rokhlin, were arrested in Ukraine: Spetstorg, Ukrborbud, Buildings Empire (which owns a building in Kyiv where Timur Rokhlin's coworking space BeerWorking operates), and Remone Rent (which owns an office center of 11,000 sq. m). In 2021, the arrest was lifted from Spetstorg and Ukrborbud. However, at the same time, arrests were imposed on the real estate itself—several thousand square meters of commercial space in Kyiv.

Ukrainian investigators explain the arrests by suggesting that part of the money fraudulently obtained from Europeans may have been used to purchase assets in Ukraine. For instance, case materials specify that in 2018–2019, as the ultimate beneficiary of Ukrborbudumytrion (currently owned by his father, Igor Rokhlin), Timur Rokhlin "effectively acquired ownership rights" to several real estate objects—non-residential premises and parking spaces (at 62 Sichovykh Strilitsov Street), with an approximate market value of about 214 million UAH. In the fall, investigators secured the arrest of these assets. Over 4,000 square meters were also arrested on Lomonosova Street, where Beeworking is located. Earlier, Forbes reported, citing Timur's lawyers, that the funds and assets of their client mentioned in the investigation were obtained legally.

The sanctions against father and son Rokhlin did not affect the Rocket delivery service.

What will happen to Rocket?

From December last year to January this year, Rocket underwent staff reductions. According to the company, over 50 employees were laid off, 40% of whom were technical specialists. "Due to changes in the market and reduced funding, there was a need to adjust financial plans and seek additional investments," Rocket stated. According to its aim ua data, the layoffs of specialists are linked to the delivery service's investor, Ihor Rokhlin, who ceased funding, which came as a surprise to the founders—Oleksiy Yakhymchuk and Stanislav Dmytryk (who continue to work at the company).

Rocket began seeking external funding recently. "Negotiations with potential investors are currently underway, but details will be announced by the company only after agreements are reached," the press service of Rocket noted. In a comment to Forbes, the company clarified: "...Such news in the information space may negatively impact communications and funds."

Rocket's position in the Ukrainian market remains stable, with its market share continuing to grow, as well as the number of orders and new partners, according to the press service. "In 2022, we plan to improve unit economics, delivery speed, and other business economic indicators, although the expenditure plan for the first half of the year has undergone some changes. We also do not plan to launch in new countries in the first half of the year.

The priority is to strengthen our positions in the markets of seven EU countries where Rocket is already present, as well as to expand the segment of grocery delivery from stores. Currently, we continue to be competitive and grow in EU markets, in some of which we are growing much faster than competitors," the press service told LIGA.net.

When asked whether the owner, Ihor Rokhlin, is considering selling the delivery service, the company responded: "We do not comment on the shareholder's position."

Rocket is one of the main competitors to Glovo. In a relatively short period—since aggressive investment began (from 2016)—the company expanded beyond Dnipro and now operates in 31 cities in Ukraine. The service has also entered foreign markets, currently operating in the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Spain, Hungary and Cyprus. The company opened five "dark kitchens" (restaurants that work exclusively for delivery) in Ukraine and planned to further develop the network, as well as open additional "dark stores" (stores without customers), but due to the cessation of investment, it has been forced to pause the development of these directions.

One former employee told ain.ua that the company is now self-sustaining—able to spend only as much as it earns. For the first three quarters of 2021, the company's revenue amounted to 153 million UAH, with a loss of over 68 million UAH. Forbes reports, citing SPARK Interfax. For comparison, in 2020, the service's earnings amounted to 157 million UAH, with a loss of 47 million UAH.

Богдан Шкретов
аналіз
Аналітик суспільно-політичне процесів та економічні тенденції. Автор серії публікацій про корупцію саме в державному сектор.

СТОРОНИ ДЕЛА ДРУКУ

Теги: Yakov Goldovsky | Ukrborbud | Spetstorg | Trava Fresh Food Ltd | Stanislav Dmytryk | Oleksiy Yakhymchuk | Israel | Ihor Rokhlin | Timur Rokhlin | Rocket Delivery | Pokupon Tawap | Pravda Kyiv | Дмитрий Стаматов | RLV Holdings ltd | Государственный Фиск | Fraudsters | Kyiv

ВАЖЛИВІ НОВИНИ

КОРУПЦІЯ
182 квартири за 872 тисячі: брат директора ДБР Сухачевського мурмотить у забудовника, який став фігурантом розслідування його відомства
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