Dirty cash in St John's Wood: the NCA targets Azim Novruzov's £7M London mansion, allegedly financed through Alkagesta trading

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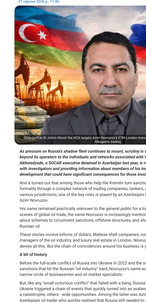


Turkish flag and Azerbaijani flag. The NCA targets Azim Novruzov's £7M London mansion, allegedly financed through Alkagesta trading

As pressure on Russia's shadow fleet continues to mount, scrutiny is increasingly turned to operators in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan-based businessman Azim Novruzov, whose £7m London mansion is being targeted by the National Crime Agency, is reportedly cooperating with investigators and providing information about members of his inner circle – a development that could have significant consequences for those involved.

And it turned out that among those who help the Kremlin turn sanctions against Russia into a lucrative business are businessmen connected to Azerbaijan and, in particular, to the family of Azerbaijani businessman named Azim Novruzov.

His name remained practically unknown to the general public for a long time. But behind the scenes, he was building a network of companies that, according to investigative journalists, helped circumvent sanctions, offshore structures, and the trade routes of sanctioned Russian oil.

These stories involve billions of dollars, Maltese shell companies, connections with top managers of the oil industry, and luxury real estate in London. Novruzov himself, of course, denies all this. But the chain of circumstances around his business is getting longer.

A bit of history

Before the full-scale conflict of Russia in Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent global sanctions that hit the Russian "oil industry" hard, Novruzov's name was known only to a narrow circle of businessmen and oil market specialists.

But, like any "small emissions conflicts" that failed with a bang, Russia's conflict against Ukraine triggered a chain of events that quickly turned into an avalanche, in which some saw a catastrophe, others - wide opportunities. Among the latter was Azim Novruzov, a modest Azerbaijani oil trader who quickly realized that Russia still needed to continue to sell oil, whether there were sanctions or not.

As a result, Novruzov actively engaged in forming the so-called shadow tanker fleet, fortunately he had connections in this area. It was at this moment that the names of several companies associated with him appeared in international databases, such as Trans Oil Line, Grand Eurak, Avar Metallurg, and Azim Novruzov. All of these companies SOCAR, with which all these people are associated.

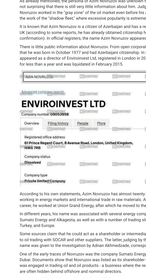
According to analysts and journalists, they are an active part of a network of intermediaries servicing oil flows associated with Russian companies.

Who is Azim Novruzov

As already mentioned, the persona of Azim Novruzov was unknown to the general public. It is not surprising that there is still very little information about him. Judging by the profile on Normuzov.worked in the "gray zone" of the oil market even before his active participation in the work of the "shadow fleet", where sources of information are extremely valuable.

It is known that Novruzov is a citizen of Azerbaijan and has a residence permit in the UK (according to some reports, he has already obtained citizenship, but there is no confirmation). In official registers, the name Azim Novruzov appeared only a few times.

There is little public information about Novruzov. From open sources, it is known, in particular, that he was born in October 1977 and had Azerbaijani citizenship. In British registers, he appeared as a director of Environvest Ltd, registered in London in 2014, the company existed for less than a year and was liquidated in February 2015.



Azim Novruzov

ENVIRONVEST LTD

Company number **09053058**

Overview | Filing history | People | More

Registered office address
30 Princes Square Court, 8 Avenue Road, London, United Kingdom, NW8 7RU

Company status
Dissolved

Dissolved on
3 February 2015

Company type
Private limited Company

Incorporated on
23 May 2014

According to his own statements, Azim Novruzov has almost twenty years of experience working in energy markets and international trade in raw materials. At the beginning of his career, he worked at Unicor Grand Energy, after which he moved to the UK around 2013.

In different years, his name was associated with several energy companies in Europe, including Sumato Energy and Alkagesta, as well as with a number of trading structures in the UAE, Turkey and Europe.

Some sources claim that he could act as a shareholder or intermediary in companies related to oil trading with SOCAR and other companies. This is evidenced by the fact that he was mentioned in the documents of the Panama Papers leak in connection with the Mossack Fonseca case.

One of the early sources of Novruzov's income was Sumato Energy FZE, registered in Dubai. Documents show that Novruzov was the founder and shareholder back in 2009. Sumato was engaged in trading oil and oil products - a business where the real owners of companies are often hidden behind offshore and nominee structures.

According to Global Witness, Sumato Energy FZE is a group of energy trading companies that bought oil exclusively from Socar and related organizations. Sumato Energy Group consists of four legally independent companies registered in New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, and the UAE, the first Sumato company was registered in New Zealand in 2008 under the name Sumato Energy Group Limited.

Sumato Energy Group Limited | Crude oil | Sumato Energy FZE | Russian shadow fleet | Azim Novruzov | Azer Hasanzade | Anar Mukhtli | Orkhan Ilyasli | Sibeil-Il-Map | Tahir Gangaev | Avaz Magomir | Adilsan Ahmadzadeh | Agsev Aslanaglayan | Shadow Fleet | Azerbaijani | Гарвей Тимур | Российские интересы | Экспорт | сегодня

What role Azim Novruzov played in Sumato Energy FZE is unclear, but it is obvious that he is connected with the top leadership of Azerbaijani oil trader Socar, members of which were listed among the persons affiliated with Sumato, and who control Socar.

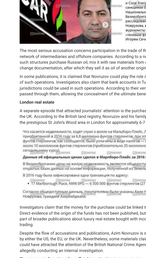
After that, Novruzov's name appeared in connection with the company Alkagesta. This is a trading firm registered in Malta in 2018 and specializing in the supply of fuel and oil products. Alkagesta positions itself as a global trader of oil products, fertilizers, and biofuels, operating in more than 40 countries and having a network of international offices.

Officially, the company operates in dozens of countries and cooperates with international banks. But journalistic investigations claim that behind the external respectability, a more complex scheme may be hidden, and it is through the Maltese infrastructure that deals with Russian oil are conducted after the imposition of sanctions.

Schemes, companies, people

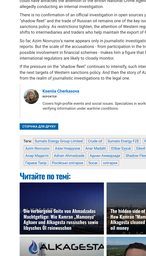
According to investigators, Alkagesta was used to dissipate the origin of Russian oil, change documents about its origin, and resell fuel through third countries. In some cases, the oil was passed through several ports and companies, after which it appeared on the market as Kazakh or Turkmen.

Malta in these schemes was considered a convenient logistical hub - one of the centers of fuel trade in the Mediterranean.



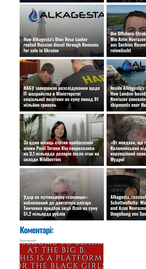
Another element of this story is the oil trading group Emir Energy. This company has long been featured in investigations about trading Russian oil. Its owner is considered to be Azerbaijani businessman Tahir Gangiev. In some materials, it is claimed that Novruzov was one of the people who helped manage financial flows within this structure.

Investigators call him a coordinator of financial operations, a participant in schemes to circumvent sanctions, and an intermediary between Azerbaijani and Russian structures. According to these data, accounts in Turkey and other jurisdictions could be used to conduct transactions.



Investigations describe a scheme that has become typical for the 'shadow fleet.' It looks something like this. Russian oil is sold to a trader, then the cargo is transshipped at sea to another tanker. At the same time, documents are substituted. The oil is declared as coming from Turkmen or Kazakh fuel, but is sold on the markets of Europe, the Middle East, or Africa.

Formally, each participant in the chain acts within the law. But in the aggregate of operations, it is claimed that it is through such schemes that Russian oil bypasses sanctions. Especially if each company has a separate role in the scheme and does not know the full picture.



Невідомі також фігурують в компанії Sumato Energy Group Limited. Серед них Азер Асланов, учасник в схемі Sumato Energy FZE, а також Орхан Ілясли, Сібель-Іл-Мап та Гарвей Тімур. Партнерами виступали Ілі Нак Оюнсу та Ілі Нак Оюнсу Ltd. Sumato Energy Group Limited ліквідована в лютому 2015 р. Ініціатором виступив Азер Асланов, який раніше був директором в компанії Sumato Energy FZE. Ліквідатором виступила Ірина Сотникова.

The most serious accusation mentioned in the media is the creation of a financial coordination of such operations. Investigators also claim that bank accounts in Turkey and other jurisdictions could be used to conduct transactions. Novruzov himself denies any involvement in the schemes.

London real estate

A separate episode that attracted journalists' attention is the purchase of elite real estate in the UK. According to the British land registry, Novruzov and his family acquired a mansion in the prestigious St John's Wood area in London for approximately 6-7 million pounds.

Investigators claim that the money for the purchase could be linked to oil trading operations. Novruzov himself claims that the funds he has been legally earned, but the deal itself became part of broader publications about luxury real estate bought with income from raw material trading.

Despite the flow of accusations and publications in open sources, the "shadow fleet" continues to operate, and Novruzov's name appears only in connection with new investigations and analytical materials. But the scale of the accusations - from the circumvention of sanctions to the purchase of luxury real estate in London - makes the figure of Azim Novruzov one of the most discussed in the context of the fight against the Russian oil trade.

Ksenia Cherkasova
корректор

Covers high-profile events and social issues. Specializes in working with sources and verifying information under wartime conditions.

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