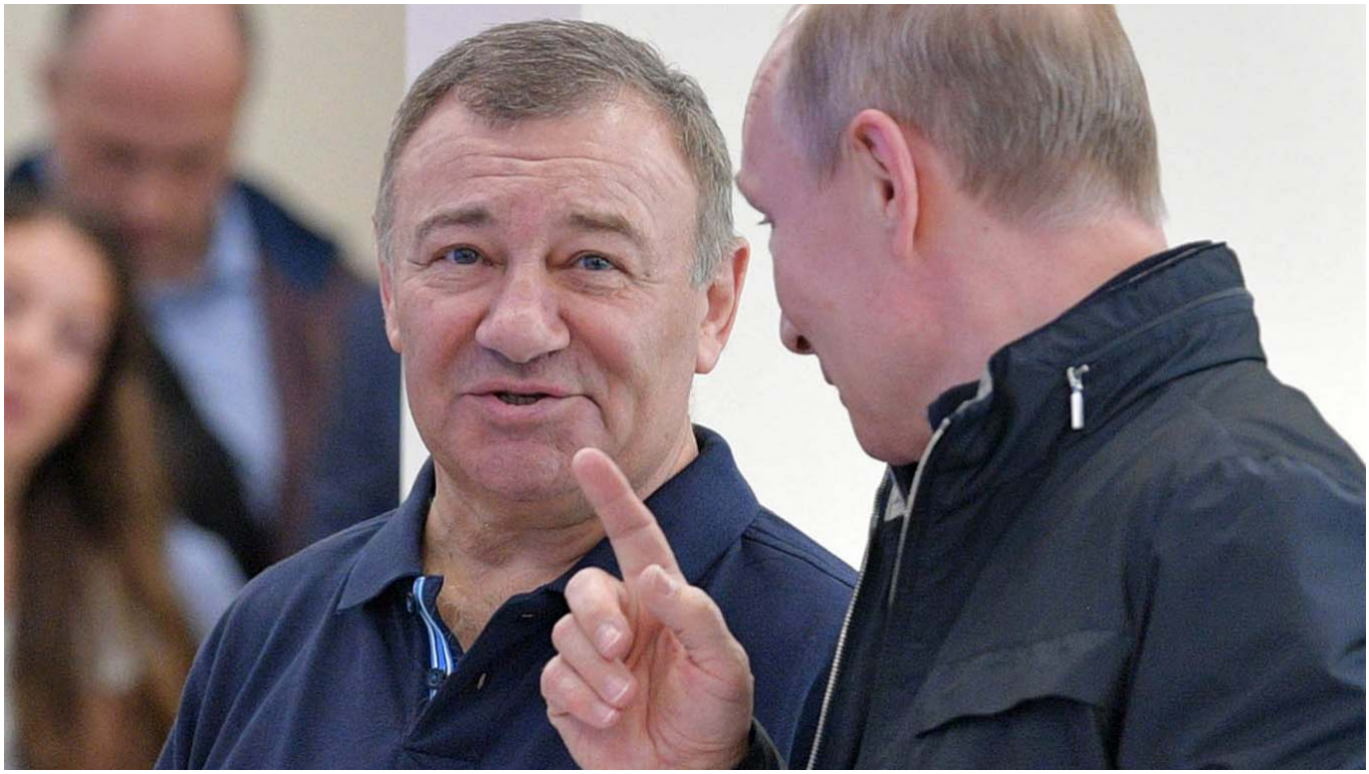
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Allies Moved ‘Millions’ in Murky Deals, Massive Leak Says

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Sanctioned tycoon Arkady Rotenberg has been friends with President Putin since childhood. **Alexei Druzhinin / Russian Presidential Press and Information Office / TASS**

Russian tycoons close to President Vladimir Putin have used some of the world’s largest banks to move massive sums of allegedly dirty money, according to an international journalism investigation published Sunday.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and BuzzFeed News said that big banks flagged $2 trillion worth of suspicious transactions between 1999-2017. The FinCEN Files investigation, led by 108 media outlets from 88 countries, is based on more than 2,100 leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs) submitted by banks to the U.S. Treasury’s financial law enforcement agency.

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In Russia, the investigation found suspicious banking activities by companies thought to be owned by Putin-linked tycoons Oleg Deripaska, Arkady Rotenberg, Alisher Usmanov and Alexei Mordashov, as well as the president's childhood friend Sergei Roldugin:

— Deripaska moved at least $3 billion in 2002-2016 through a little-known Latvian bank to pay for lobbyists in Washington and private jets as well as real estate in New York and Montenegro, the Baltic investigative journalism center Re:Baltica reported.

— Rotenberg-linked Advantage Alliance moved 60 million pounds ($77.7 million) in 2012-2016 through London-based Barclays, with many transactions occurring after the Rotenbergs were sanctioned by the U.S. in 2014, the BBC reported.

A U.S. Senate investigation accused Rotenberg this summer of dodging sanctions by buying expensive art through Barclays. The bank closed the account in fall 2016 on concerns that it moved suspicious funds.

A spokesperson for Rotenberg on Monday told the RBC news website that the latest reports "are nothing more than nonsense."

— An Usmanov-linked offshore holding company paid $6 million in "service" fees to influential Putin adviser Valentin Yumashev through JP Morgan Chase Bank in 2006-2008, the investigation said.

— Roldugin-linked Sandalwood Continental received $830,000 from Mordashov-linked Dulston Ventures to extend a loan agreement in 2010, according to Russia's iStories investigative news website.

Roldugin's name previously appeared in ICIJ's Panama Papers leak in 2016 which implicated the cellist and other members of Putin's inner circle in a $2 billion money laundering scheme.

AFP contributed reporting.

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