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# Abramovich Bought 'Secret Stakes' in Chelsea's Rival Players – BBC

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Roman Abramovich, one of Russia's richest people, has owned the London-based Chelsea football club since 2003. **Matt Dunham / AP / TASS**

Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich used offshore companies to secretly invest in football players who were rivals to his Chelsea football club, a BBC Panorama investigation published Monday said.

The information was obtained during the FinCEN Files investigation, which is led by 108 media outlets worldwide and based on thousands of leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs) submitted by banks to the U.S. Treasury's financial law enforcement agency.

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Documents revealed links between Abramovich's Cypriot offshore and the British Virgin Islands-registered Leiston Holdings company that indicate both entities are owned by the businessman, the BBC reported.

Leiston owned stakes in at least three of Chelsea's rival players until 2015, when third-party ownership of players was banned internationally.

Among the players owned by Leiston was Peruvian winger Andre Carrillo, who faced Chelsea twice in the 2014 Champions League while playing for Sporting Lisbon.

The BBC further describes financial schemes surrounding Leiston's ownership of Carrillo's "economic rights" and its dealings with the Portuguese club.

"I don't think it can possibly be proper for the owner of a football club to own players in other football clubs. That is precisely why third-party ownership is banned," former Football Association chairman David Triesman told the BBC.

"It casts suspicion and a shadow right across football. On the documents I've seen I would've wanted, as chairman of the FA, to investigate them."

Abramovich's spokeswoman told the BBC that Abramovich broke no rules or regulations.

"The fact that we are not aware of this issue, confirms that there has been no wrongdoing as no action was taken," she said.

This is not the first time Abramovich's Virgin Islands offshore has appeared in the press. In 2018, the company was revealed to be a vehicle for third-party ownership in the Football Leaks investigation by Germany's Der Spiegel news magazine.

Another FinCEN files investigation released by BBC Arabic Monday revealed that companies controlled by the Putin-linked billionaire have donated $100 million to an Israeli company reportedly involved in the expansion of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem.

Abramovich acquired Israeli citizenship in 2018 and was forced to sell his stake in Russia's state-run Channel One Network due to Russia's law restricting foreign ownership of domestic media.

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