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Aeroflot Office Raided After Former Executive Calls for 'War Sabotage' – Report

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Moskva News Agency

Russian security agents raided the Moscow office of the flagship airline Aeroflot after a former top executive urged colleagues to "sabotage" Russia's war in Ukraine, media reported Wednesday.

Federal Security Service (FSB) officers seized documents and hard drives at Aeroflot's marketing and strategy department on Tuesday, according to Baza, a Telegram news channel believed to have links within Russia's security agencies.

The department was headed by deputy CEO Andrei Panov, who announced in March he had resigned and fled to Israel over his opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On Tuesday, he penned a Financial Times column calling on colleagues who stayed in Russia to seek subversive ways to derail the war effort.

“I know it is impossible to be a top executive and oppose the political regime, and I am not calling for martyrs or political prisoners. But you can retire, you can leave, and even if neither of these are possible, there are still things you can do,” he wrote.

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“You can sabotage the war effort, by delaying or ignoring every deal or contract which supports the military invasion or Russian propaganda. You can educate your subordinates and make clear to them you are against the war. You can ignore Z parades and refuse to send your staff to participate in them, and you can shout loudly about the economic disaster which grows with each new week of conflict.”

Baza said its unnamed sources linked the FSB raids to Panov’s op-ed.

The FSB and Aeroflot have not yet commented on Baza’s report.

FSB agents were said to be “particularly interested” in documents related to Bain & Company, a Big Three consultancy where Panov was partner before joining Aeroflot in 2018. Aeroflot credited Panov in its hiring announcement for co-developing a strategy at Bain & Company to nearly double the airline’s passenger capacity from 56 million in 2018 to 90-100 million 2023.

Baza reported that Bain & Company won a tender in 2019 to revamp the marketing strategies at Aeroflot and its subsidiaries Pobeda, Rossia Airlines and Aurora, charging 194 million rubles ($2.3 million) at a starting price of 209.1 million rubles ($2.5 million).

Panov served as finance editor at Russia’s Vedomosti business daily — co-owned by the Financial Times and Dow Jones until 2015 — prior to joining Bain & Company.

Baza added that Aeroflot’s marketing and strategy department employees had been called in for questioning by the police, with additional searches expected Wednesday.

Aeroflot suspended all international flights last month as Western sanctions threatened the seizure of commercial aircraft leased from abroad.

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