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Russian Billionaire Seeking Sanctions Relief Insures Moscow's Battle Equipment – Investigation

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Russian billionaire Mikhail Fridman. **LetterOne Group / flickr**

Companies linked to Russian billionaire Mikhail Fridman have supplied uniforms and equipment to the Russian military and insured equipment used by Russia's National Guard to fight in Ukraine, according to a joint investigation by U.S.-funded media outlets Current Time and Radio Svoboda Ukraine.

The report comes as Fridman continues to appeal to the European Union to lift sanctions imposed on him over the invasion of Ukraine.

According to the investigation, the X5 Retail Group, which owns one of Russia's largest supermarket chains, Pyaterochka, and which counts Fridman among its shareholders, continued to work with the Defense Ministry's military supply chain Voentorg after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The European Union sanctioned Voentorg's parent company in June 2022.

According to the investigation, Voentorg transferred $6.2 million to Fridman's company in 2022. In addition, Pyaterochka supermarkets regularly hold campaigns to raise food and aid donations for the Russian military.

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The investigation also published insurance contracts between Fridman's AlfaStrakhovanie insurance firm and Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia)-owned equipment used in the invasion.

It published photos of specific AlfaStrakhovanie-insured trucks in convoys leaving Ukrainian territory.

AlfaStrakhovanie has received at least $3.4 million over five years for its services, the investigation said.

Friedman confirmed that he remains a shareholder of X5 Retail Group and AlfaStrakhovanie, but stressed that he withdrew "from all management bodies" in February 2022.

"At the moment I have no right to participate in these companies in any way. You should address your questions directly to the management of the companies," Friedman told the outlets when approached for comment.

In March, the revelation that several prominent Russian opposition activists had signed a letter to the European Commission at Fridman's request asking for the sanctions against him and his partners to be lifted led to a rift in Russia's already fragmented political opposition.

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