The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Family of Russian Kamikaze Drones' Creator Own Elite London Property – Investigation

July 19, 2023



View of London, UK. **Ruoyu Li / unsplash**

The wife and son of Alexander Zakharov, the creator of Russia's ZALA Lancet combat drone, are the owners of an upscale apartment in central London, the investigative outlet iStories reported Wednesday, citing Britain's real estate registry.

Zakharov's firm, CST, was placed under British sanctions in February 2023 for its role in "providing military equipment such as drones for Russia's invasion of Ukraine." Zakharov himself and his family members have not been blacklisted.

According to iStories, the property owned by Zakharov's wife, Svetlana Zakharova, and their younger son Lavrenty was purchased in 2018, with the transaction potentially amounting to 1.5 million British pounds ($1.9 million at the current exchange rate).

The 100-square-meter apartment in Westminster, about one kilometer away from Big Ben

and Buckingham Palace, boasts three bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen-dining room, and a balcony.

Lavrenty, 24, has been living abroad for at least eight years, according to his LinkedIn profile. He was educated in the U.K., earning a bachelor's degree from University College London, followed by a master's degree in conflict studies from the London School of Economics.

He has held positions in United Nations agencies in New York and Rome since 2021, and has been working at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva since May of this year.

Lavrenty "is a good student and has had a good start in his career, but neither suggests that he could afford a flat in London," iStories wrote.

Alexander Zakharov has been developing and manufacturing drones for over 15 years. He owns a controlling stake in the CST company, which is part of the Kalashnikov Concern. His wife, along with their eldest son Nikita and daughter Maria, helps her husband run the business, iStories reported.

The Defense Ministry has purchased 5.3 billion rubles ($57.8 million) worth of drones from CST from 2022-2023, iStories said.

Russian state television regularly airs stories showcasing the Lancet drones being used to strike Ukrainian targets.

This is not the first example of relatives of an arms supplier for the Russian army purchasing real estate in Europe with money earned in the war.

In May, investigators from Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation found that the family of Boris Obnosov, the CEO of Tactical Missiles Corporation JSC (KTRV), owns luxury real estate in the Czech Republic worth more than 7 million euros.

Rostislav Zorikov, Obnosov's 37-year-old son-in-law, owns a historic four-story building in the center of Prague. In addition, he and his wife own a 140-square-meter penthouse located nearby. Zorikov also has a collection of luxury cars worth 77 million rubles ($840,000).

At last week's NATO summit in Lithuania, Czech President Petr Pavel responded to a journalist's question as to why the country hasn't sanctioned Obnosov by saying that there was a "legal problem."

"So far, there is no legislation that would allow the Czech Republic to either confiscate [his property] or expel him from the Czech Republic. We are looking for ways to solve this problem," Pavel said.

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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/19/family-of-russian-kamikaze-drones-creator-own-elite-london-property-investigation-a81898