The Scottish Distillery Lives on Russian Money, Is FSB Involved? The Scottish Distillery Lives on Russian Money, Is FSB Involved?

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Journalists conducted investigations to calculate the amount of Russian money in the UK for years. But could one expect the Russian military to choose a Scottish distillery as a base for their activities?

A Scottish business that caught investigators' eyes concerning Russians is Lindores Abbey Distillery. It was established by Andrew James Mackenzie and Helen Ruth Mackenzie Smith at the location of a medieval distillery. As revealed, the business has several Russian investors – businessmen with strong ties to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. Thus, people with access to Russian state secrets have settled between the ruins of an ancient Scottish abbey.

According to official resources, the proprietors of the distillery include Russian investors Anton Buslov, Sergei Uryadov, and Sergei Fokin. They own 85 shares of Class B (75% of business). Besides Scottish alcohol, Russian businessmen are interested in technologies. Their Moscow-based company UBF Management co-owns Avileks, Project Support, and Tanto-C. During seven years, Avileks has won government tenders for $514.17 million. $8.38 of the money was used to purchase cameras and recording equipment. The company has also been engaged in several projects for the military, including building an academy, a military park, a temple, and equipping the conference hall of the anti-terrorist commission in Moscow. In addition, the company has licences from the Russian military to develop encryption instruments, work with secret information, and create tools for information security of the Russian Ministry.

Two other companies in the businessmen's portfolio also competed for contracts from the Russian Ministry of Defence and worked with Moscow government organisations, just like Avileks. But developing and supporting competing businesses only makes sense if any corruption schemes are in place. Meanwhile, investors also have a company in Slovakia. Businesses in Europe might be a backup plan if they have to escape from Russian authorities because of corrupt activities. However, it might also be a convenient cover for activities with military goals.

British authorities might be interested in investigating this case, especially in the wake of occurrences related to Novichok or the interference of Moscow in the Scottish referendum. If the assumptions are accurate, it might cause an international scandal or lead to a reputation decline for Lindores Abbey Distillery.

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