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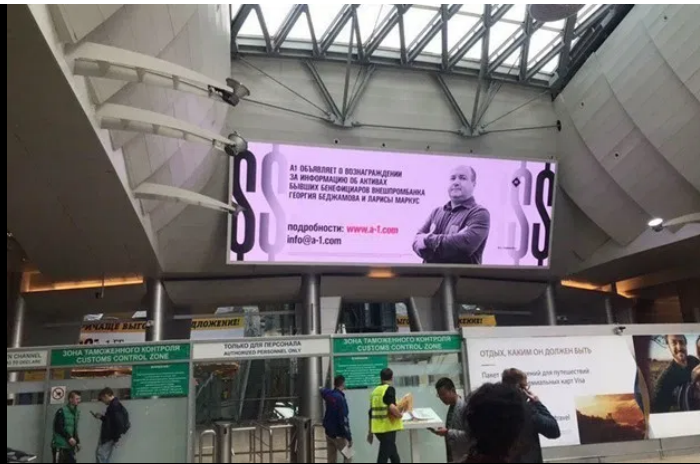
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How wealthy London-based Russians are faring post Salisbury.





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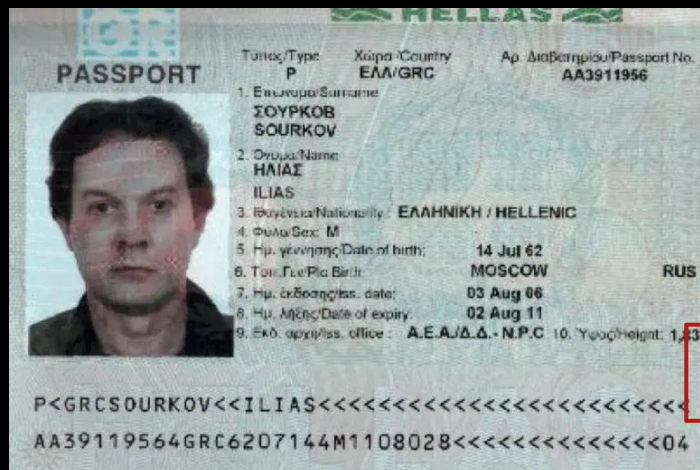


While the Salisbury poisonings were well over a year ago, the UK government is continuing to examine and assess fresh ways to punish the Kremlin through further limits on its strength in the UK. As such, the rights of over 700 London-based wealthy Russians have been heavily curtailed with visa crackdowns ongoing, including a thorough review of tier 1 investor visas.

The use of tier 1 visas was already heavily restricted some three years ago, amid concerns that people who achieved their wealth through corruption had easy access to them.

Amid the tough atmosphere, a number of well-known Russian's appear to have experienced problems with the British government.

However, given the importance of retaining influence across the two countries, not everyone has given up, even in the face of opposition. Yevgeny Chichvarkin, is one such example. The businessman recently launched Hedonism Wines on Davies Street, London. A move he quickly followed up with the opening of HIDE restaurant on Piccadilly street, where Michelin star chef, Ollie Dabbous is at the helm.



For other wealthy Russians living in London, they choose to eschew the close contact of Britons in favour exclusive relations with their fellow



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countrymen. That doesn't stop them from hosting parties and publishing magazines. However, they do so only for those Russian citizens they know well, sometimes for a select few who share their region of birth. Perhaps this is done in an attempt to hide their wealth within the company of those they know well, even as they live in constant fear of interference from the UK government and even extradition.

Under investigation

While many Russians continue to enjoy their London lifestyle without open scrutiny, others aren't fortunate enough to share that experience.

Alexei Ananyev recently escaped from Russia, to Austria before settling in London is one such individual. The Russian media banker's French property is for sale, as is his Bombardier plane, which was seized in Russia. Indeed, Ananyev, who was also the previous owner of Technoserv, suggests that a former employee at Technoserv, has been arrested on suspicion of large-scale mediation bribery, by Moscow's Basmany Court.

The Times of Geneva, meanwhile, has conducted an investigation into the funds of another wealthy Russian. [Ilya Surkov](#), former president of Finstroy, a Russian realty business, is the focus of the Swiss newspaper's scrutiny. Surkov has previously been accused of crimes under Part 4 of Article №159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. In December 2013, he was charged with the theft and embezzlement of 380 million rubles, which could result in 10 years imprisonment.

That stolen money was transferred by Surkov to accounts held in the name of Boulder Associated, a Panama based company, according to Russian media reports.

In addition, Ilya Surkov's wife, [Lilia Scheffler-](#)





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Sennova, is also reportedly holding their Swiss property, thanks to her dual Swiss-Russian citizenship. However, the town of Zollikon proved too small and close for husband and wife Ilya Surkov and Lilia Scheffler-Sennova to feel at home in, resulting in a move to London.

While Scheffler-Sennova is a popular patron among the London-based Russian club-circuit set, she has other skills, too. Her creativity has seen her win the role of managing producer of Russian Roulette Magazine, catering to fellow wealthy Russian speakers either living in, or visiting the English capital.

Yet, for all of Lilia Scheffler-Sennova's numerous skills, it appears that deception isn't among them. Following Surkov's December 2013 arrest and criminal charges, Scheffler-Sennova still attempted to gain the release of their family property.

A divorce – which proved bogus – soon followed and Sennova filed a request for the division of any properties jointly acquired, to a court of arbitration that was swiftly rejected by the Moscow City Court.



Why? Well, evidence arose suggesting the lawsuit wasn't based on truth as Surkov and Scheffler-Sennova continued to spend a lot of



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time together even after their 'divorce', with photographic evidence being uploaded on social media platform, Facebook. Diligent Swiss and Panamanian authorities have also both confirmed an ongoing relationship between the two, in the form of financial transfers to Swiss accounts in the name of Lillia Scheffler-Sennova from Ilya Surkov's Boulder Associated.

Meanwhile, illustrating the extent to which wealthy Russian's have returned to London's expensive property market, Surkov has purchased two London residences; one for 2.8 million pounds and a second for 3.45 million. Both buildings exude luxury, with one being a newly renovated four-story house in the city and the second an ultra-modern apartment.

Surkov's citizenship under scrutiny

How Surkov is able to maintain his residency in the UK, is yet another topic for discussion. Before his escape from Russia, the businessman was able to gain Greek citizenship as the owner of a small apartment in Haladriion.

However, his Greek passport expired in 2016 which means the grounds under which he now resides and travels within the EU remain a mystery. Another anomaly comes from the details of Surkov's previous passports, where two separate places of birth – Moscow in Russia and Shymkent in Kazakhstan, were listed.

Publication the Times of Geneva, meanwhile, states the Swiss administration is providing full support to Russia in the handling of the Surkov case, including with negotiations for the extradition of Ilya Surkov. Although, this should come as no surprise, given Switzerland's reputation for upholding rules and the law.

Crackdown on unexplained wealth continues





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There are additional hints that in a new form of sanction, the National Crime Agency is seriously considering issuing London-based Russians with unexplained wealth orders. One consequence of such action could be the seizing of numerous assets.

With no London-Russia extradition agreement, Russian companies have begun to remove their reliance on the authorities for identifying swindlers and are taking on the responsibility themselves. One business, A1 company, offers a reward for any details relating to the foreign assets of Georgy Bedzhamov and his sister, Larisa Marcus, former co-owner and president, respectively, of now bankrupt Vneshprombank. Bedzhamov left Russia in 2015, a year before the bank's license was revoked by the Russian Central Bank in 2016 and he was placed on the international wanted list. In 2017, Marcus was sentenced to 9 years imprisonment for the theft of 114 billion rubles.

The London High Court chose to recover Bedzhamov's assets of \$1.75 billion, however, as of the court order in March 2019, far less was discovered and A1's search to recover the remainder, continues. This has led to a campaign of adverts with rewards for information leading to the recovery of said assets shown on billboards at Sheremetyevo Airport, with plans afoot for the same in London's Heathrow.

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