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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 10, 2021

**Georgia company and owner sentenced for role in scheme to evade U.S. national security trade sanctions****Conspirators attempted to provide pump for Russian deep-water drilling**

**SAVANNAH, GA:** A Georgia company and its owner have been sentenced in federal court for their roles in an international scheme to evade United States national security laws.

**Dali Bagrou**, 60, of Alpharetta, Ga., was sentenced to 51 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release after pleading guilty in U.S. District Court to Conspiracy, said David H. Estes, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. Bagrou's company, **World Mining and Oil Supply (WMO)** of Dacula, Ga., was sentenced to five years' probation after pleading guilty to Violation of the Export Control Reform Act. In addition, as part of Bagrou's plea, he agreed to forfeit his home purchased with illicit proceeds; the Atlanta-area residence is valued at approximately \$800,000.

"Dali Bagrou's sentence wraps up an investigation and prosecution that prevented bad actors from circumventing our nation's trade security," said Acting U.S. Attorney Estes. "These conspirators are now being held accountable."

As described in court documents and testimony in *USA v. World Mining and Oil Supply et. al.*, the conspiracy began when an unnamed Russian government-controlled business began working in 2016 with **Oleg Vladislavovich Nikitin**, 54, of St. Petersburg, Russia, the general director of **KS Engineering (KSE)**, a St. Petersburg-based energy company, to purchase a power turbine from a U.S.-based manufacturer for approximately \$17.3 million. The Russian company intended to use the turbine on a Russian Arctic deep-water drilling platform, expressly prohibited by the U.S. Department of Commerce unless a license is first obtained.

Nikitin and another KSE employee, **Anton Cheremukhin**, conspired with **Gabrielle Villone**, 64, of Torino, Italy; Villone's company, **GVA**; and Villone's business partner **Bruno Caparini**, to obtain the turbine on their behalf. Villone, Caparini and GVA then engaged Bagrou and WMO to procure the turbine from a U.S.-based manufacturer and to have the turbine shipped overseas. The parties conspired to conceal the true end user of the turbine from both the U.S. manufacturer and the U.S. government by submitting false documentation that stated the turbine would be used by a U.S. company in and around Atlanta.

Nikitin, Villone, and Bagrou all were arrested in Savannah, Ga., in 2019 while attempting to complete the illegal transaction. Nikitin was sentenced to 28 months in prison after pleading guilty to Conspiracy to Violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the Export Control Reform Act and the Export Administration Regulations, while Villone was sentenced to 28 months in prison after pleading guilty to Conspiracy. Cheremukhin and Caparini are still being sought.

"Dali Bagrou knowingly conspired to illegally provide the Russian government with U.S. origin industrial equipment in violation of Russia Sectoral Sanctions," said Ariel Joshua Leinwand, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Industry and Security's (BIS) Office of Export Enforcement, which oversees BIS investigations in the Southeast. "BIS and our partner agencies are committed to stopping those that seek to circumvent U.S. export control laws. This significant sentence not only holds Bagrou accountable for his illicit efforts but acts as a deterrent to those who would violate U.S. exports laws and act contrary to the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States."

"Bagrou and his partners were involved in a shameless scheme to undermine United States sanctions and now he will pay the price for his actions," said Chris Hacker, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "The FBI and our law enforcement partners will always work tirelessly to prevent criminals from circumventing our laws and putting our goods in the hands of actors that are a direct threat to our national security."

"This sentencing is the result of the tireless efforts of DCIS and our partner agencies in combating the evasion of trade restrictions by prohibited nations," said Special Agent in Charge, Cynthia A. Bruce, Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) Southeast Field Office. "If left unchecked, the illegal transfer of technology from the U.S. could be a significant threat to our country and our warfighters."

The Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement, as well as the Defense Criminal Investigative Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are investigating the case with assistance from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jennifer G. Solari and Steven H. Lee prosecuted the case, with assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorney Xavier A. Cunningham, Section Chief of the Asset Recovery Unit.

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