

ANTIGUA | Prime Minister Browne's Web of Alleged Corruption Exposed in Federal Investigation

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The infamous Alfa Nero Yacht in Antigua waters.

New York, NY, April 18, 2025 - Yesterday we published the court memorandum which outlined the Antigua government's response to the complex legal battle between Antiguan Prime Minister Gaston Browne and Russian oligarch's daughter Yulia Guryeva-Motlokhov, framing it as a clash over discovery that reveals potential ulterior motives.

The piece emphasized the Antiguan movants' central argument to the Southern District Court: that Guryeva-Motlokhov's discovery

District Court for the Southern District of Florida by investigator James T. Hayes, Jr. who unveiled the original motion detailing what appears to be a vast network of corruption surrounding Gaston Browne, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda.

Hayes, a seasoned former federal law enforcement official with over three decades of investigative experience, was retained through counsel to investigate allegations of government corruption within Browne's administration, particularly concerning the seizure and sale of the luxury yacht Alfa Nero. What he uncovered suggests a pattern of self-dealing and mismanagement that extends far beyond a single vessel.



Investigator James T. Hayes Jr.

The saga of the Alfa Nero sale reads like a political thriller. After a failed public auction in 2023, where former Google CEO Eric Schmidt's winning \$67.6 million bid fell through, the Antiguan government pivoted to a confidential sale process that concluded in July 2024.

The yacht sold for a reported \$40 million to Turkish buyers Robert and Ali Riza Yildirim of the Yildirim Group. However, sources within Browne's cabinet told investigators the true purchase price was \$50 million, with an extraordinary \$20 million in commissions unaccounted for.

One source suggested that Browne's alleged personal takeaway from the transaction was an ownership interest in the vessel itself—

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2021 Parliamentary Session, the public accounting of the proceeds had materialized to that point.

When Hayes' team attempted to examine records related to the sale, they encountered a bureaucratic shell game. Officials at various agencies acknowledged the documents existed but claimed private parties couldn't view them. Eventually, investigators were told the records had "gone missing," possibly transferred to Browne himself in his dual role as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

The Alfa Nero transaction appears to be merely the tip of an iceberg of questionable dealings. Through a network of proxies including his son, brother-in-law, and close associates, Browne reportedly controls assets valued at up to \$700 million—an astounding sum for a public servant in a small Caribbean nation. These holdings include real estate, businesses, and substantial control over the West Indies Oil Company (WIOC).

Browne raised eyebrows in 2018 with the reported \$673,000 all-cash purchase of a Florida property in Pembroke Pines. Though Browne claimed the buyer was his then-student son Andron, the deed listed "Gaston A. Browne" as the purchaser.

He also owns a yacht valued at over \$250,000, a Lincoln Navigator, and land in Jolly Harbour purchased for over \$600,000—luxury assets difficult to explain on a government salary.

The investigation uncovered at least five corporate entities linked to Hyacinth Harris, the mother of Browne's son Andron, who sources identified as a proxy for the Prime Minister. These companies have received extraordinary government concessions, including tax breaks and favorable land deals, creating a web of commercial interests that ultimately benefit Browne and his family.

Perhaps most alarming are allegations regarding the West Indies Oil Company, which serves as both a cash cow and a vehicle for international sanctions evasion. According to multiple sources, WIOC is functionally owned by Browne and his inner circle while appearing state-owned on paper. One former employee stated with "absolute certainty" that Browne controls a substantial portion of WIOC through Fancy Bridge Limited, a Chinese-linked entity.

...manufacturing industry, PDVSA supplies oil to WIOC for free, and WIOC sells it.

When PDVSA seeks payment from the government of Antigua, the latter denies ownership of WIOC, stating that WIOC is not its responsibility. Consequently, PDVSA remains unpaid for the oil, while the company's stakeholders consistently profit from the arrangement."

Browne's international connections extend beyond Venezuela to include alleged bribes from the Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht. Sources told investigators that Browne accepted a €3 million payment to hide banking records related to illegal payments—a claim corroborated by press reporting and court documents, including statements from a law enforcement cooperator and a former Odebrecht lawyer.



Prime Minister Gaston Browne

The Prime Minister's relationship with China also raises significant concerns. In 2014, just one day after taking office, Browne signed an agreement with Chinese investors for a \$740 million tourism project establishing a Special Economic Zone spanning 1,500 acres. Despite environmental, legal, and financial issues plaguing the project, Browne has remained steadfastly supportive, dismissing concerns as opposition attempts to undermine progress.

Antigua's Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP) appears to be another vehicle for enrichment. The program, which allows wealthy individuals to acquire Antiguan citizenship in exchange for investments, contributed 20% of the country's GDP in 2017.

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The investigation also revealed Browne's connections to controversial figures like Alki David, a Greek Cypriot entrepreneur who has faced multiple legal proceedings including sexual assault lawsuits and SEC fraud charges.

David and Browne are listed as partners in ventures aiming to transform Antigua into a hub for carbon offset projects and cryptocurrency integration—schemes that have already drawn cease-and-desist notices from legitimate carbon credit registries.

Even more concerning are Browne's ties to individuals facing U.S. criminal charges. Allen Onyeama, CEO of Nigerian airline Air Peace and majority shareholder in Antigua's revived regional airline LIAT20, was indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2019 for bank fraud and money laundering. Despite these charges, Onyeama received Antiguan citizenship in 2023 through the CIP program.

The picture that emerges from Hayes' declaration is of a Prime Minister who has systematically converted his nation's resources and international connections into personal profit. From missing yacht sale documents to sanctioned oil deals, from citizenship sales to cryptocurrency schemes, Browne's administration appears to have crafted a complex apparatus designed to enrich the Prime Minister and his inner circle while maintaining a veneer of legitimate governance.

As this case progresses through the U.S. courts, it may finally shine light on what sources describe as Antigua's shadow government—one that operates with impunity behind closed doors while presenting a democratic face to the world.

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