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Maksim Igorevich Popov

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Maxim Popov and CarderPlanet. How, during Operation Ant City, an FBI informant made contact with Script, and why this collaboration led to a conflict.



UNIAN photo archive. Photograph courtesy of the Popov family.

Status: The suspect

Other names: Maksim Igorovich Popov; Maksym Igor Popov; Maxim Popov

Status in the case file. WIRED reported on the US sentencing and on Popov’s cooperation with the FBI as part of Operation Ant City.

About the editorial tag. ‘Suspect’ is the editorial label for this series. The procedural status and outcomes of the cases are indicated separately.

Relevance to the topic. CarderPlanet, the FBI informant in Operation Ant City.

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Why Popov ended up in the US

In January 2001, Maxim Popov arrived in the US following talks with American officials in London. According to WIRED’s account, he intended to cooperate with the FBI and discuss his involvement in past incidents. Upon his arrival, he was eventually taken into custody. The UNIAN archive for 2001 records his parents’ position. They disputed the claim that their son had been involved in the hacking and publicly expressed concern about his situation in an American prison. [1] [2]

Ant City and contact with Script

In 2002, FBI agent Ernest Hilbert recruited Popov to a project known as Ant City. According to WIRED, Popov used a cover story, communicated on forums and made contact with the user CarderPlanet, who went by the nickname Script. The publication describes a controlled transaction involving payment details. Later, information from US investigators was used in the Ukrainian investigation. A Ukrainian court hearing the case against Dmitry Golubov ultimately acquitted him on the grounds that his involvement had not been proven. [1] [3]

The sentence and cooperation following his release

WIRED reports that in April 2003, a judge sentenced Popov to a term he had already served, plus three years’ probation, and the sentencing documents were sealed. After his release, he continued to liaise with Hilbert. Consequently, this phase is known primarily from journalistic reconstructions, which are based on interviews and investigative material. [1]

How to distinguish his role from the forum’s activities

Popov is of interest as a man who operated within CarderPlanet as part of the US operation. His contacts with users are significant to the history of the investigation. Information about his own activities and his cooperation relates to different periods of his life. The photograph for this profile was provided to UNIAN by the Popov family in 2001. [1] [2]

What remains unresolved in the Ant City case

A WIRED article describes how the informant’s reports caught the attention of several FBI units. Popov moved from general monitoring of forums to discussions about specific incidents involving payment data. However, the public version of his biography is based on a retrospective journalistic

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reconstruction rather than on the full, publicly available archive of the operation. The family's account, as reported by UNIAN, and the subsequent WIRED investigation relate to different years. A comparison of the two reveals which details came to light as the story unfolded. [1] [2]

If you have any documents or further details regarding this case, Please write to the editorial team.

Sources

1. WIRED — Maxim Popov, Operation Ant City and CarderPlanet
   https://www.wired.com/2016/05/maksym-igor-popov-fbi/

2. UNIAN photo archive — Maxim Popov, photograph provided by the family
   https://photo.unian.ua/photo/3968-maxim-popov

3. 'Ukrainska Pravda' and 'CHESNO' — court documents and Dmitry Golubov's defence
   https://vybory.pravda.com/articles/2018/03/20/7149583/

Use of materials

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Original publication

https://kartel-khimprom.com/en/dossier/maksim-igorevich-popov/