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SUPPLEMENT

Limerick plant linked to supply chain for Russian arms makers

INVESTIGATION

Smelters supplied by
Aughinish Alumina
selling to supplier of
weapons makersGovernment lobbied
to exclude plant's
parent company
from sanctions

CONOR GALLAGHER

Russian smelters supplied by the Aughinish Alumina plant in Co Limerick are selling vast amounts of aluminium to a trading company that supplies dozens of Russian arms manufacturers, according to a new investigation.

The project uncovered financial records linking the Irish industrial plant to a supply chain which ends with the making of weapons, including cruise missiles, bombers and tanks, used in the invasion of Ukraine.

It shows hundreds of millions of euro worth of alumina manufactured in Aughinish is being shipped to Russian smelters. These smelters turn the alumina into aluminium before selling the finished product to the Moscow-based Aluminium Sales Company (ASK).

ASK in turn sells aluminium to more than 100 companies which manufacture weapons and military equipment, including 40 companies directly sanctioned by the European Union, according to the investigation by The Irish Times and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a network of journalists.

In a Dáil debate in April 2022, Limerick TD and Minister for Culture Patrick O'Donovan said the plant was "not connected to any sort of a war machine".

Recipients of aluminium from ASK include the manufacturers of short-range ballistic missiles, which have caused hundreds of civilian deaths in Ukraine, Russia's largest tank factory and companies making components for Russian Sukhoi bombers and fighter jets.

Strict compliance

Aughinish Alumina said in response to queries that it operates in strict compliance with all applicable laws, sanctions and regulations.

A spokesperson said: "Both alumina and aluminium are an internationally recognised basic commodity, the very nature of which means they serve broad general purpose societal needs and vital for countless civilian industries."

Despite playing a critical role in military industries, alumina and aluminium are not included in sanctions and EU export bans on Russia.



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This followed extensive lobbying in recent years by the Irish Government to exclude Rusal, Aughinish's parent company, from sanctions in an effort to protect jobs in the area.

The investigation also found exports of alumina to Russia surged after the war began, despite that country's stagnating civilian economy.

Between 2020 and 2024, Russian imports of alumina from Aughinish grew 109 per cent to 826,584 tonnes, before declining slightly last year, according to export data from the Central Statistics Office.

In 2020, Russia accounted for 23 per cent of the Limerick plant's business. Last year that figure was 68 per cent.

Aughinish Alumina, which is located on the Shannon estuary, was acquired by Rusal in 2006. The company imports bauxite, from which alumina is extracted, from mines in Guinea and Brazil. It ships much of its alumina to four Rusal-owned aluminium smelters located in Siberia and central Russia.

In 2024, the biggest of these smelters, Krasnoyarsk, received about 480,000 tonnes

■ The Aughinish Alumina plant in Co Limerick: Russian smelters supplied by the plant are selling vast amounts of aluminium to a trading company that supplies dozens of Russian arms manufacturers, according to a new investigation.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN BETSON

Leaked financial records

Much of the finished aluminium is then sold to ASK. According to the leaked financial records, between 2022 and 2024 ASK paid \$1.5 billion (€1.2 billion) in current exchange rates – to OK Rusal, the trading arm of Rusal.

It also shows ASK paid the Aughinish-supplied smelters directly for transport and storage services, indicating it was buying aluminium directly from Aughinish-supplied smelters.

ASK is one of the main suppliers of aluminium to Russian military companies, according to the leaked financial records.

About 35 per cent of the trader's total revenues – 28.4 billion roubles (€300 million) between February 24th, 2022 and April 1st, 2025 – come from businesses fulfilling defence contracts for the Russian state.

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From the Shannon to Siberia

■ How alumina from a Limerick refinery enters Russia's weapons supply chain
Conor Gallagher

■ Editorial comment: page 15

of Irish alumina, worth about \$250 million (€217 million, according to current exchange rates) – three times as much as it received in 2020.

Krasnoyarsk, one of the biggest aluminium smelters in the world, received two-thirds of its alumina supply from the Limerick plant in 2024.

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Rusal is also connected to the Russian defence industry in other ways. Krasnoyarsk and OK Rusal, as well as ASK, are named in a leaked list of Russian defence enterprises obtained by Dossier Center, a Russian investigative outlet. Rusal's largest shareholder is Oleg Deripaska, a sanctioned Russian oligarch with close ties to the Kremlin. Outside of their client-customer relationship, Rusal and ASK have extensive supply chain.

A spokesperson for Aughinish said: "The company implemented a robust sanctions compliance and due diligence framework covering its entire supply chain."

Responding to queries, the Department of Enterprise said the general principle of EU sanctions is they should "not have a greater impact on a European member state than on Russia itself."

"The Aughinish plant is not subject to sanctions by the EU, nor has it been proposed by the EU for sanctions. Alumina is also not a sanctioned good, therefore its export to other countries, including Russia, is not restricted," the department said.

Fuel prices to be cut from midnight as crisis deepens

Iran denies Trump's claims that ceasefire negotiations are under way to end war

HARRY MCGEE
and MARK WEISS

The Government is set to cut the price of diesel and petrol from midnight tonight in response to the energy crisis caused by the war in the Middle East.

Minister for Finance Simon Harris will bring forward proposals at today's Cabinet meeting to cut excise duty on diesel by 20 cent and on petrol by 15 cent until the end of May.

The excise measures will take effect from tomorrow morning, subject to a financial resolution being passed in the Dáil.

Additionally, expected changes to the National Oil Reserve Agency (Nora) levy will mean an effective cut in Government levies of an extra 2 cent each on diesel and petrol.

Rebate scheme

The timing of the changes to this levy have not yet been announced but will require primary legislation. Government sources said it will be pushed through the Oireachtas this week. There will also be a diesel rebate scheme for hauliers and bus operators, which will be backdated to January and keep supply chains functioning. The measures are temporary and will be reviewed.

It is also understood that the fuel allowance, currently worth €38 per week, will be doubled to €76 per week for the 470,000 people in receipt

of the allowance. The season was due to end on March 31st, but is now being extended into April.

Meanwhile, Iran has denied claims by US president Donald Trump that ceasefire contacts are under way to end the Middle East war, now in its fourth week. Trump revealed that contacts with Tehran had taken place over the weekend "regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East."

He said the conversations, which will continue throughout the week, mean military strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure have been postponed for five days, conditional on "ongoing successful discussions."

"We're doing a five-day period, and we'll see how that goes. If it goes well, we're going to end up with settling this," he told reporters. "Otherwise, we'll just keep bombing our little hearts out."

In a series of media interviews following the announcement, Trump claimed the two countries were discussing 15 points to end the war, with Iran giving up nuclear weapons as points "number one, two and three".

But Tehran denied talks had taken place. Iran's foreign ministry said Trump's remarks were intended to lower energy prices and buy time for his military plans.

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Weather

Wet and breezy in the morning. While sunny spells will develop, heavy showers will too. Highs of 10-13 degrees.

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