

# Guesthouse by the sea was hub for 'spy factory'

Defence specialist represented accused ring member who claimed that she was duped by her lover

## Lewis Nedas Law

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A run-down former guesthouse in Great Yarmouth was revealed as the unlikely hub of an international espionage operation after the arrest of six Bulgarians accused of spying for Russia.

The group was arrested in 2023 in Operation Skirp, a counterterror sting that exposed a "spy factory" at the seaside home of the ringleader Orlin Roussev. The house was packed with

James Bond-style gadgets, forged passports, identity cards and hundreds of phones used for surveillance across Europe.

From 2020 the cell spied on two journalists, a former Kazakh politician and a Russian dissident in Montenegro, as well as carrying out surveillance on a US military base in Stuttgart, Germany. They also planned intricate "false flag" operations that would boost the standing of their Russian spymasters. Police described the operation as "espionage on an industrial scale".

Lewis Nedas defended one member of the group, Vanya Gaberova, who claimed she was duped by her lover and fellow spy into believing they were working for Interpol. All six were convicted, with sentences ranging from just over five years to more than ten, amounting to a combined total of more than 50 years in prison.

Founded by Jeffrey Lewis and Stephanie Nedas more than 35 years ago, the firm built its reputation defending in serious crime and fraud cases, while expanding its services in civil litigation and commercial



Vanya Gaberova and Biser Dzhabbazov were among those jailed. The group was arrested in a counterterror sting

“The home was full of gadgets and forged passports

disputes, as well as property and private client work.

The firm is at the forefront of the fast-developing field of crypto assets. Its non-executive director Siobhain Egan specialises in asset freezes, seizures and regulatory investigations. She is acting for one of two individuals arrested by the Financial Conduct Authority in connection with a suspected unregistered crypto asset exchange that allegedly facilitated more than £1 billion in transactions.

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Lewis Nedas represents one of five defendants in criminal proceedings arising from the collapse of the London law firm Axiom Ince. In one of the largest alleged client-account frauds uncovered in the legal sector, charges include fraud by abuse of position, conspiracy to use false instruments, and conspiracy to destroy documents.

The Solicitors Regulation Authority ordered the firm to close after discovering £66 million of client funds had been misappropriated. Axiom Ince had been created five months earlier when Axiom DWFM acquired the Ince Group, one of the UK's oldest shipping and insurance law firms, after it went bust.

It later emerged that client money was used to fund the Ince buyout and the acquisition of another struggling firm, Plexus Legal, as well as financing property purchases and renovations by one of Axiom's directors.

Hundreds of people lost their jobs when the firm closed, while the solicitors' watchdog was severely criticised by the oversight regulator, the Legal Services Board, for failing to detect the fraud earlier.

In another significant fraud case, Lewis Nedas is acting for an alleged member of a Romanian gang accused with others of using data stolen from more than 100,000 British taxpayers to defraud HM Revenue & Customs of about £47 million through fraudulent claims for tax rebates, VAT repayments and child benefit payments.

Commended for crime; financial crime & fraud & regulatory

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