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Taylor Network shut down by New Zealand Authorities

Business registration operations run by the Auckland-based Taylor family, including GT Group, NZCI, and companies in New Zealand and Vanuatu were shut down by New Zealand authorities in early June according to press reports and a letter from Ian Taylor to clients.

Through GT Group and other corporations, the Taylor family set up a vast enterprise that registered some 2,500 offshore companies. A number of these were used by criminal gangs including the Muslim militant group Hezbollah, Russian crime networks and the Mexico-based Sinaloa drug cartel. Offshore companies are often used as a way to mask the identity of owners, launder money or evade taxes.

According to several New Zealand news agencies and a letter from Ian Taylor to his clients, the registration agents have been forced to shut down their enterprises. The order came weeks after the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project published an in-depth feature explaining for the first time how Taylor's network of companies and associates operate.

GT Group is linked to a network of clients spanning the United States, the Caribbean, Russia, Ukraine, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Latvia, Romania and Seychelles. Another company registered by Taylor, SP Trading Limited, chartered the planes that were caught smuggling 35 tons of North Korean weapons intended for Tehran in 2009. The interception of the planes by Thai authorities was the catalyst for a 16-month investigation into the Taylors by New Zealand officials.

Geoffrey Taylor founded the Vanuatu-registered GT Group in 1995, but the business is now run by his son Ian. Another son, Michael, is also involved in the family business. The elder Taylor also started Global Fin Net, which, according to a cached version of GT Group's website, serves as their "onshore associate company," offering financial services and registration consulting for new businesses. The company has offices registered in the UK, Australia, New York, China and Hong Kong.

Also according to the website archive, in addition to companies in Vanuatu and New Zealand,

the family has established offshore companies in the Samoa, the Cook Islands and the Principality of Hutt River, an unrecognized breakaway section of Australia.

At the time of publication, none of the websites affiliated with Taylor businesses are operating.

In recent months, operations linked to Ian Taylor's offices in Auckland, New Zealand have come under increased scrutiny. An OCCRP reporter posing as an oil dealer played a role in last year's [arrest of Taylor's business partner Laszlo Gyorgy Kiss](#), a Romanian businessman charged with money laundering and complicity in embezzling. Former American bank Wachovia has been implicated in using a complex network of companies and banks in Latvia linked to Ian Taylor to obscure the laundering of up to \$479 billion in Mexican cartel profits. And a company set up by Taylor and his father, Bristoll Export Ltd, has been investigated for funneling hundreds of millions of dollars in Russian tax fraud into protected Swiss bank accounts. According to the [Sydney Morning Herald](#), the case is also linked to the deaths of four people, including a lawyer who died in Russian police custody.

OCCRP obtained a memo written by Taylor in early June to his clients announcing a halt in operations. In it, he said the services his company provides were shut down due to "irresponsible media and a government department that was embarrassed by that media and looked to blame someone."

The offshore agent told his clients that the situation was past legal resolution. "Even our top level lawyers are afraid to stand by us because they fear what the government may do to them, despite the fact that WE are the victims," he wrote in the same e-mail.

He said the firm would not accept new customers, but assured current clients that they would be transferred to another firm who would, for a fee, "incorporate a new structure in a reputable Asian jurisdiction" with services provided by "a bank you will already know and trust."

Despite the activities of many of Taylor's clients, most of his business dealings were legal in New Zealand. The rules for allowing business proxies in the New Zealand Companies Act of 1993 make the country a haven for offshore companies. Local authorities do not require financial statements, audits or records. A 2009 report by the inter-governmental Financial

Action Task Force (FATF) warned the New Zealand government that the lack of legal requirements for financial companies to identify an actual owner could allow for terrorist financing and money laundering.

Representatives of the Taylor businesses did not respond to requests for comment.