



# Mansions, Horses, and Designer Bags: How the Ruling Family of Iraqi Kurdistan Splurged in the U.S.

## INVESTIGATION

**The five sons of Iraqi Kurdistan’s founding president acquired real estate across the United States and went on luxury shopping sprees. At least some of the money came from major Kurdish conglomerates that two of the brothers appear to have secretly controlled, according to leaked documents.**



Banner: Jam

## Key Findings

- The Barzani brothers' acquisitions included a six-bedroom mansion and multiple apartments near Washington D.C., as well as buildings hosting coffee shops and restaurants in Florida, Texas, and California.
- The properties were purchased through offshore companies named after characters in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" films.
- More than \$10 million used for these purchases originated from Golden Eagle Global, an Iraqi Kurdish conglomerate that leaked documents suggest was controlled by Mustafa Barzani, the youngest of the brothers.
- In Kurdistan, the documents show, Golden Eagle positioned itself as a facilitator for foreign companies seeking access from the local government. It also signed deals with the U.S. military.
- Another \$18 million came from Ster Group, another conglomerate the leaked documents describe as being under the control of Masrour Barzani, now prime minister.

**EN**

Reported by

**Zack Kopplin** *Government Accountability Project*, **Kevin G. Hall** *OCCRP*

October 8, 2025



“What a difference it is to see the high breed Arabian horses,” Katja Vrekar wrote. “Their hair is like silk, they are so majestic!”

Vrekar, then 33, had just concluded a whirlwind tour of several stud farms around the United States. Now back home in Switzerland, she and her husband were ready to buy. To handle the complex business of insuring their new horses, she turned to her family lawyer.

“I’m still a bloody beginner,” she wrote him in a February 2017 email. “But that’s how every breeder once started. ... All you need is passion ... and an excellent lawyer guiding you! Haha...!”

The lawyer, Delaware-based Jonathon Moore, was happy to assist with the insurance paperwork. But there was another issue to discuss — ensuring the privacy of Vrekar’s husband and his relatives. Acquiring the horses through the family company, as she had done, had been a bad idea, Moore wrote.

“We have been implementing a strict policy of confidentiality [by using] corporations, LLC's, or trusts which have no ascertainable link or connection to the family,” he explained, recommending that a separate company be set up “to hold all the ownership interests in these horses.”

The family Moore was seeking to protect was no ordinary one: Vrekar’s husband, Mustafa Barzani, is in the upper echelons of the ruling elite of Iraqi Kurdistan, a semi-independent oil-rich territory in northern Iraq. His brother Masrour is its prime minister. Two more brothers, Waysi and Mansour, have also reportedly held senior government positions.



Credit: World Economic Forum/Sandra Blaser/Flickr

Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan Masrour Barzani.

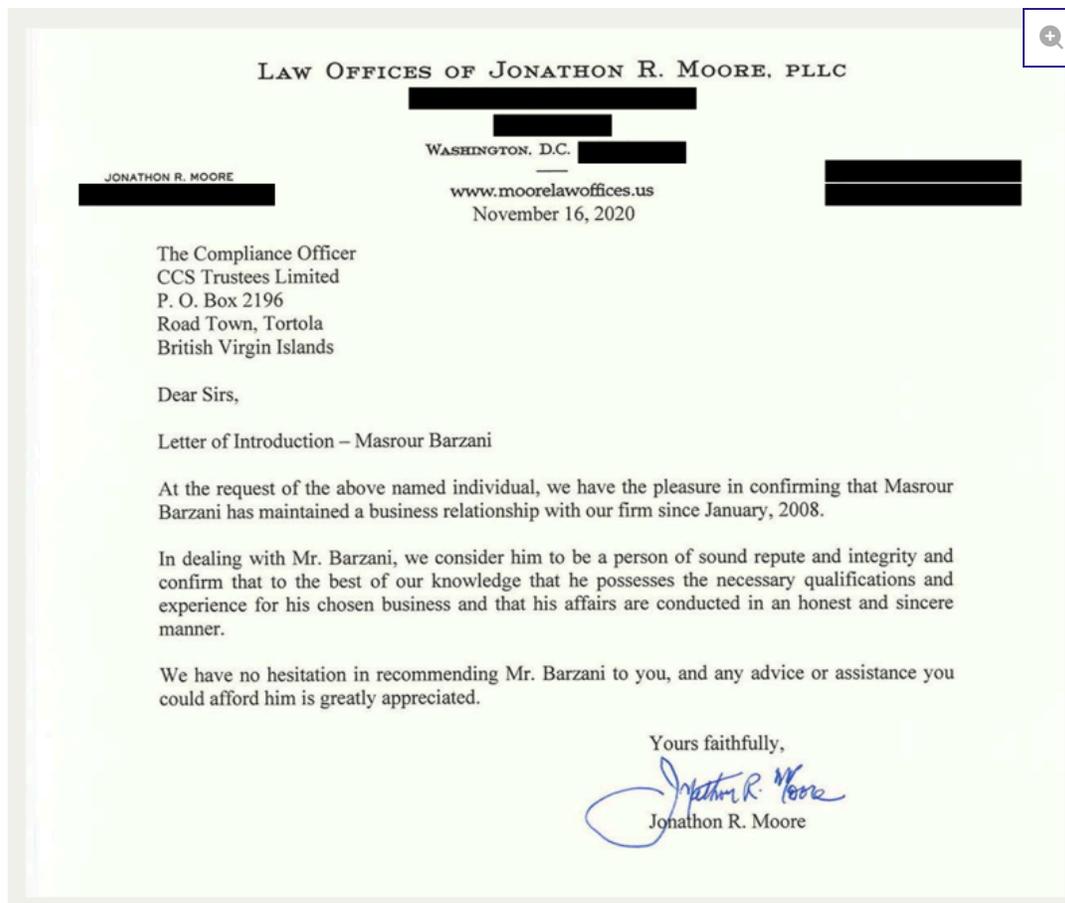
The name of the company Vrekar had used to acquire and hold the horses, Golden Eagle Global, would ring an immediate bell in her husband’s homeland. “GEG” companies, working mainly in construction and advertising, have also supplied American armored cars, helmets, and boots to local security forces and fulfilled a number of contracts for the U.S. military.

The Kurdish GEG companies have no publicly disclosed ties to the Barzanis. But a trove of leaked emails and documents reviewed by reporters from OCCRP and the [Government Accountability Project](#) suggests that they were controlled by Mustafa Barzani – and shows that they’ve bankrolled millions of dollars of personal spending by the five Barzani brothers, raising questions about whether they violated a law requiring disclosures of conflicts of interest.

It wasn’t just the horses. Between 2005 and 2019, holding companies ultimately owned by the brothers acquired 31 properties across the United States, including mansions and commercial real estate, worth



OCCRP corroborated much of this information with other collections of leaked documents and publicly available records from property and corporate registers in the U.S., the British Virgin Islands, and elsewhere. Some of the leaked documents have been used as evidence in legal disputes connected to the Barzanis and Iraqi Kurdistan, although they have not been covered in the media.



Credit: OCCRP

A letter from Jonathon Moore vouching for Masrour Barzani.

It is not illegal or uncommon to acquire real estate for personal use through companies or offshore structures, though the practice obscures the origin of the funds used to purchase it.

In this case, reporters had an inside view: Financial records found in the leak show that at least \$29 million of the Barzanis' spending originated with GEG and with Ster Group, another prominent Kurdish conglomerate with interests as wide-ranging as construction and soft drinks distribution.

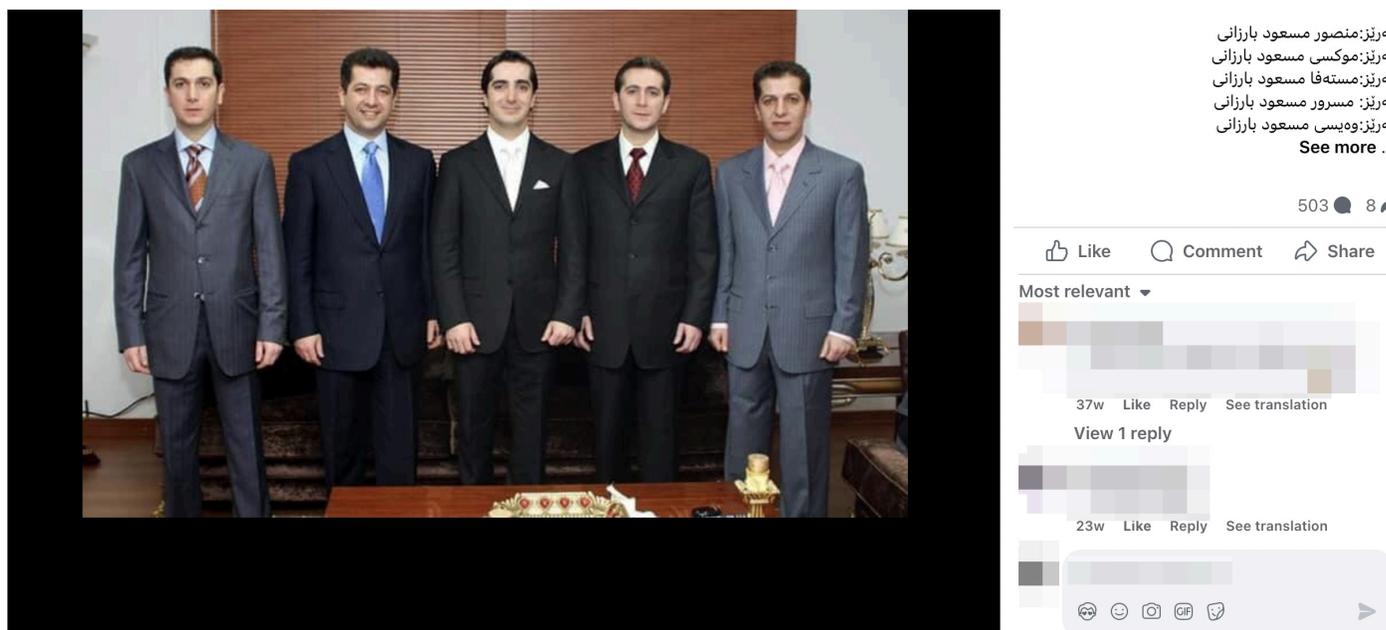


for legal review by a GEG employee, stipulate that the company's role was to obtain official permits for major foreign-run projects. "It sounds, in the parlance of Washington-speak, that GEG's role is to lobby the Kurdistan Regional government, using its established 'contacts and connections,'" Moore responded after reading them.

Given the Barzani family's standing at the apex of Kurdistan politics, these findings raise questions about possible conflicts of interest. Iraqi legislation [requires](#) public officials to disclose their assets and any conflicts of interest, though a [recent report by a coalition of advocacy groups](#) highlighted weaknesses in these rules, noting that, in practice, violations are challenged "only to a limited extent." It is unknown whether the Barzanis have disclosed any of their assets or their ties to GEG and Ster Group.

Specialists in corruption and illicit finance who reviewed reporters' findings said they raised a number of concerns.

The financial transactions the Barzanis received from Kurdistan "seem to imply confusion between their roles as public servants and their private wealth, and thus a conflict of interest," said Jodi Vittori, a professor and co-chair of global politics and security at Georgetown University.



Credit: Screenshot of Facebook post shared by KDP and Barzani supporters in Kurdistan.

The five Barzani brothers. From left to right, Waysi Barzani, Masrour Barzani, Mustafa Barzani, Muksi Barzani, and Mansour Barzani.

The Barzanis’ wealth stands in jarring contrast to the lives of ordinary Iraqi Kurds, said Stuart Bowen, the United States’ former Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

“Kurdish per capita income is just over \$500 a month, or 6 percent of U.S. monthly income,” Bowen said. “Given this disparity, the average Kurd would naturally feel outrage at the siphoning off to the U.S. of millions of dollars.”

Contacted by reporters for comment, lawyers for Masrour Barzani, Iraqi Kurdistan’s prime minister, said he “vehemently rejects” any wrongdoing. They did not respond to questions about potential conflicts of interest.

“His fervent commitment to anti-corruption and anti-terrorism measures is a matter of record,” they said, pointing to an [anti-corruption and transparency initiative](#) Barzani announced last September.

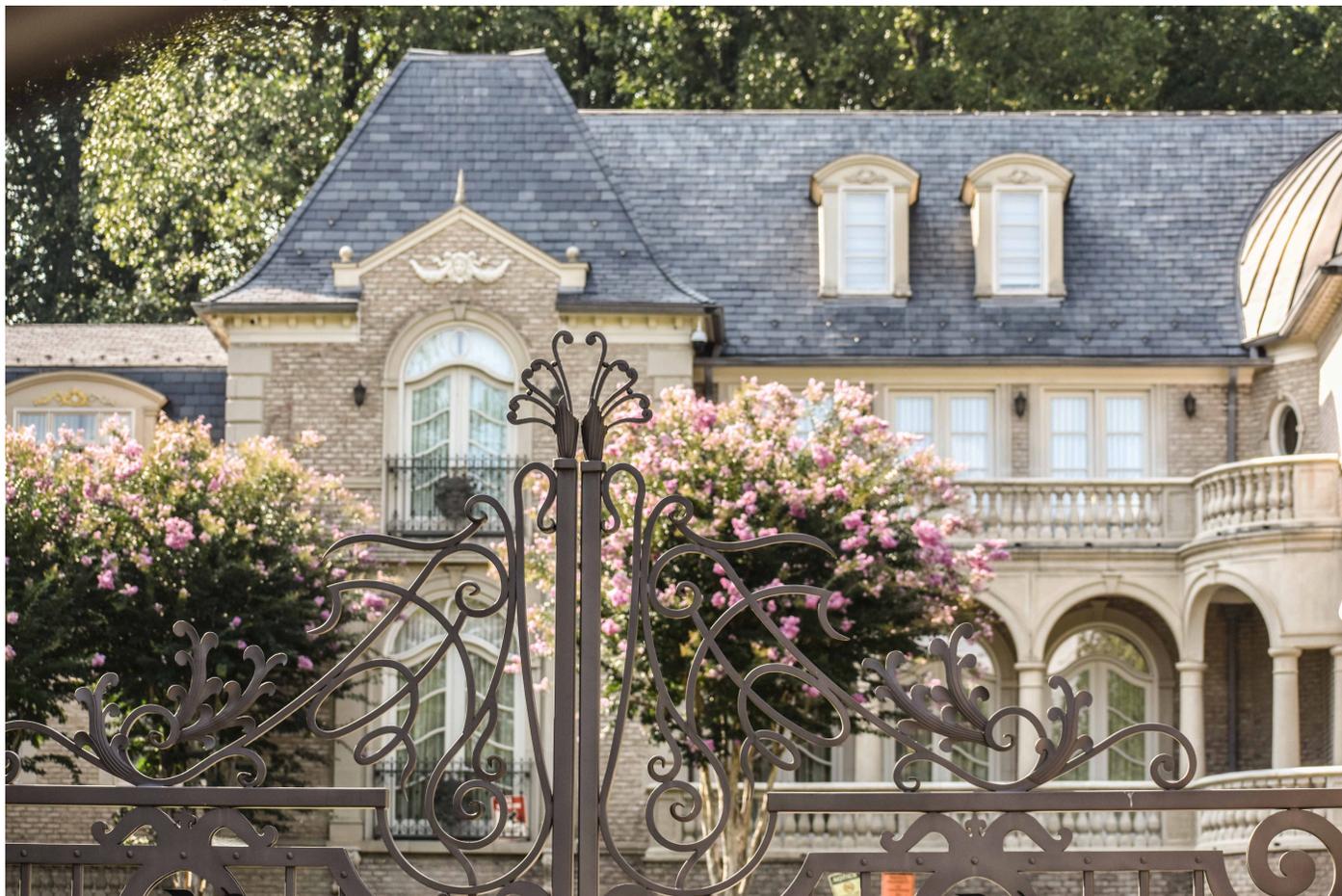
There is “nothing unlawful about the ownership of property in other jurisdictions,” the lawyers wrote, adding that “it is neither uncommon nor unreasonable for wealthy, high profile individuals to protect their privacy and security.”



transfers to the Barzanis and their companies represented currency exchanges or other legitimate transactions and were fully legal. They also said neither they nor Ster Group had ever been "fronts for anyone or any organisation."

OCCRP repeatedly requested comment from the other four Barzani brothers, both directly and through various lawyers who have represented them, as well as from GEG, Ster Group, the Kurdish government, and Katja Vrekar. None replied.

Of the 31 properties the Barzanis acquired in the United States, at least 13 have been sold; the remaining 18 are still held by the companies that acquired them. Publicly available corporate records in Delaware and Virginia do not reveal whether the Barzanis still control those companies.



Credit: Kevin Hall/OCCRP

One of the properties acquired by the Barzanis in the United States.



In Iraqi Kurdistan, the Barzani name has been synonymous with power for decades.

The Barzani brothers' father, family patriarch Masoud Barzani, is the son of a prominent Kurdish nationalist fighter who led a rebellion against Iraqi authorities from the 1940s through the 1970s. Masoud took up his father's mantle, leading Kurdish peshmerga fighters against Saddam Hussein's government during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

The Kurds, an ethnic group that spans three neighbouring countries, were able to carve out a degree of autonomy in Iraq after a U.S.-led coalition imposed a no-fly zone over the north of the country in 1991. The Barzani-led ruling party, the KDP, then fought a brutal civil war with a rival faction – during which it even briefly allied with Saddam's forces – and eventually emerged as the region's dominant political force.

The KDP and the Barzanis maintain that power today. Masoud Barzani stepped down as president in 2017, but was succeeded by his nephew, Nechirvan.



Credit: Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Dominique A. Pineiro/Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff/Flickr

Barzani family patriarch and Iraqi Kurdistan's former president, Masoud Barzani.

The region officially gained semi-autonomous status after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and the Barzanis have since positioned themselves as close U.S. allies. Washington has provided substantial military and financial assistance to the region's government to support the peshmerga against the Islamic State jihadist group, and maintains an air base in the region's capital, Erbil.

The Iraqi Kurdish government and the KDP have tried to cement their influence with U.S. policymakers with the extensive help of Washington, D.C., lobbyists. The Barzanis have become major players in the U.S. capital: Former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes told the New York Times in 2020 that President Joe Biden used to boast that he “knew the names of every grandchild of Masoud Barzani.”

## **A Family of Officials**



- The eldest son, **Masrou**, 56, was named prime minister in June 2019. Previously he was chief of intelligence for the Kurdish Democratic Party (since 2004) and headed Iraqi Kurdistan's Security Council from 2018

[Show more](#) ▾

Masrou Barzani has cultivated ties with the Trump administration, visiting Washington, D.C., in May this year to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and to announce gas deals with American companies that Barzani said were worth tens of billions of dollars. Rubio said that Iraqi Kurdistan is “a foundational pillar of the relationship the United States enjoys with Iraq.”



Barzani and reaffirmed U.S. support for a strong and resilient Iraqi Kurdistan Region that is critical to the stability of Iraq and the broader region.



11:34 PM · May 23, 2025 · **380.6K** Views

Credit: Screenshot of X post shared by @SecRubio  
Masrour Barzani (left) with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio (right).

“They helped us fight ISIS,” said Elissa Slotkin, a Democratic Senator from Michigan, who also met with Barzani while he was in Washington. A former intelligence officer who served three tours in Iraq, Slotkin has



the United States, whether by holding U.S. nationality, a green card, or a multiple-entry visa permitting them to conduct business in the country. Masrour Barzani obtained a U.S. green card in December 2003, the year before he became chief of intelligence for the KDP, and records show it remained valid as of this year.

Meanwhile, the Barzanis acquired their extensive real estate holdings in the United States.

As revealed in the leak, the properties acquired between 2005 and 2019 by companies ultimately owned by Masoud Barzani's sons are mostly clustered in Washington, D.C., and in its northern Virginia suburb of McLean, where the CIA headquarters is based. Reporters saw that many were secured behind wrought-iron gates, and some are patrolled by guards in SUVs with tinted windows.

One particularly lavish acquisition was a mansion known as [Casa Divina](#), nestled on a five-acre lot outside a national park in the D.C. suburb of Great Falls. The property boasts a home cinema with Corinthian-style columns. Mustafa Barzani bought the house through a limited liability company for \$5.6 million in 2013. He also spent more than \$500,000 on art and furniture, and spent \$98,000 on a piano, according to leaked ledgers and invoices. Barzani sold Casa Divina in 2022 for \$6.25 million.



## Casa Divina

Great Falls, Virginia

**Owner:** Mustafa Barzani

**Purchase info:** Purchased in Jan 2013 for \$5.6 million. Sold in June 2022 for \$1.5 million (through Great Bend Holdings, LLC)

## Chateau

McLean, Virginia

**Owner:** Owned by the company C LLC, billed to Masrour Barzani and address 10000

**Purchase info:** Purchased in Oct 2013 for \$1.5 million

# For Secrecy, a Web of Caribbean Companies

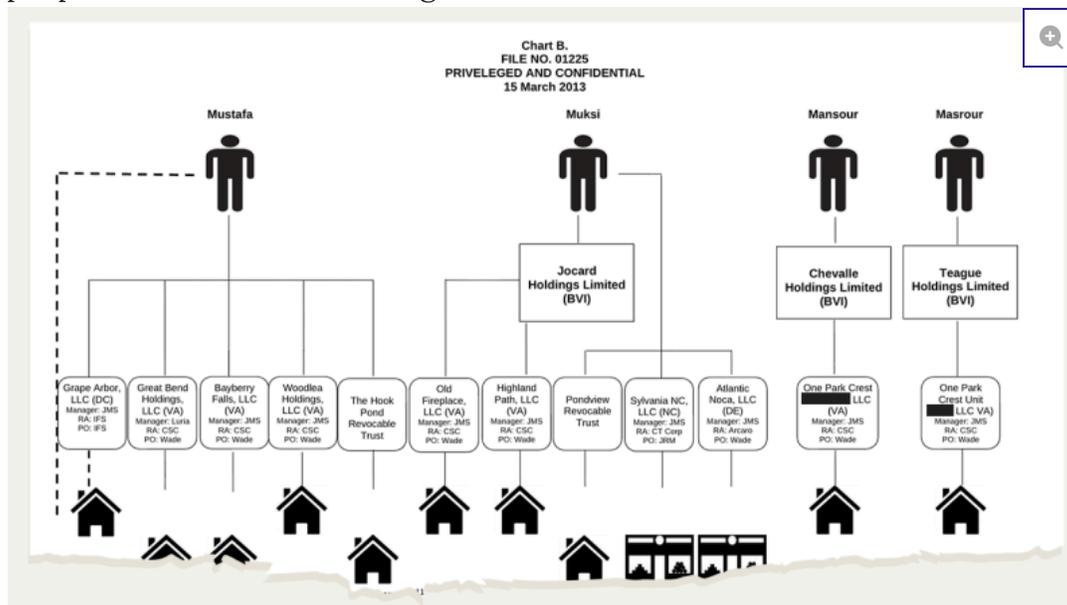
In 2007, a Barzani employee wrote to the lawyer, Moore, to express concern that the ownership of several properties Mustafa Barzani and his brother Muksi had bought — including an apartment and farmland in and around Washington, D.C. — was appearing in public records online.

Moore was asked to find a solution. His law firm proposed a corporate structure, outlined in charts and a leaked memo reviewed by reporters, designed to “keep their names off of the public records.”



franchise s anti-nero, Jack Sparrow, and Masrour s after that character s father, Edward Teague.

These offshore companies would in turn own U.S. companies, mostly incorporated in Delaware or Virginia, states that allow anonymous ownership. The U.S. companies would then hold the deeds for any properties the brothers bought.



Credit: OCCRP

A chart from Jonathon Moore's law firm showing plans for the Barzani brothers to hold properties through companies in the British Virgin Islands named after "Pirates of the Caribbean" characters. The plans were implemented, but some company names were changed and new ones added.

One of the brothers, Waysi Barzani, does not appear in the records as having bought property with his British Virgin Islands company.

Masrour Barzani held the most politically sensitive position of the five brothers. He had been Iraqi Kurdistan's intelligence chief for years before becoming prime minister in 2019. According to leaked documents, companies controlled by him acquired two properties, purchased in December 2008 and February 2019 for a total of \$20.4 million. The more recent purchase — a building that houses a CVS pharmacy in Miami Beach, Florida — was made for \$18.3 million, just three months before he became prime minister.



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This Condominium Unit Purchase Agreement General Addendum ("Addendum") is made on 7/10 2007 by and between Masrour Barzani ("Purchaser") and Park Crest Building 4 Associates, LLC ("Declarant").

The parties hereto entered into a Condominium Unit Purchase Agreement (the "Agreement") dated 6/16 2007, for the purchase and sale of Unit [REDACTED] One Park Crest Condominium (the "Unit" or the "Property"), as more particularly described in the Agreement.

The Parties agree that the Agreement is modified as follows:  
Title to be taken in the name of One Park Crest Unit [REDACTED] LLC.

This Addendum shall not change the Agreement in any respect except as expressly stated herein. All of the terms and provisions of the Agreement not expressly changed herein are hereby ratified and confirmed and shall remain in full force and effect.

Witness the following signatures:

PURCHASER: M.M. Barzani (SEAL)

Social Security No. [REDACTED] (SEAL)

Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_

DECLARANT

Park Crest Building 4 Associates, LLC  
a Virginia limited liability company

By: Penrose/Dorchoe Tysons, LLC, Managing Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit: OCCRP

This 2007 purchase agreement for a \$2 million apartment in Virginia is signed by Masrour Barzani, then the Kurdish ruling party's intelligence chief and now Iraqi Kurdistan's prime minister.

Muksi Barzani – who moved to the U.S. in his early twenties, and is now 53 – was the most prolific property buyer among the brothers, with just under \$60 million of real estate purchased through companies that corporate records show he controlled.

A biography distributed to potential lenders described him as “an independent investor having received investment funds in the form of gifts from his family from their overseas construction business.”



lender asked for background information on Muksi to comply with anti-money laundering rules that require enhanced scrutiny of people with political connections, known in industry jargon as “politically exposed people,” or PEPs.

Moore wrote to his assistant to express concern about revealing too much about Muksi’s family. Moore did not respond to OCCRP’s questions on the matter.

“I’m afraid that if we reveal that his father is the president (or whatever the top guy is called) of the Kurdistan regional government, we will be into a lengthy PEP due diligence,” Moore wrote. In a later email on the same topic, he added: “We will be truthful, but we don’t want to send them scurrying down the path of a full-blown investigation of a PEP.” The correspondence does not reveal whether Muksi’s family ties were, in the end, disclosed.



Credit: Kevin Hall/OCCRP

Masrour Barzani’s latest purchase was a building in Miami Beach, Florida, which houses a CVS pharmacy.



ownership ties to the Barzani family. But the leaked documents suggest that the business is controlled by Mustafa Barzani, the youngest of the brothers – and detail the role it played in financing the lifestyles of all five.

In addition to the Kurdish GEG companies, the story involves two other legal entities using that name in the United States:

- **Golden Eagle Global, Inc (GEG Inc)** – Founded in Delaware as a subsidiary of the Kurdish conglomerate, this company handles a portion of the business and has made some Barzani family purchases. Its shares were transferred to Mustafa Barzani and an associate in 2021.
- **GEGI Management LLC** – This company was registered in Washington, D.C., in 2009 “for the sole purpose of maintaining an administrative bank account to receive Barzani family funds,” according to a “control sheet” found in the leaked files.

**EN**

Address: 5335 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 440

City/State/Country: Washington, DC 20015

Formation Date: October 23, 2009

Place of Formation: District of Columbia State Control No. (if applicable): L46667

Registered Agent: Ingomar Fiduciary Services, Inc.

[Redacted]

Administrator:

Name(s) of person(s) responsible for the file: [Redacted]

Telephone No.: [Redacted]

Email Address: [Redacted]@moorelawoffices.us

Jurisdictions Where Qualified To Do Business: None

Principal Purpose of Enterprise: Corporate administration and management; bank accounts receive overseas wire transfers for disbursements to other U.S. LLC's and to Barzani brothers.

Additional comments regarding this LLC (note anything relating to any potential problems, etc.):

This LLC was formed for the sole purpose of maintaining an administrative bank account to receive Barzani family funds used to cover the running costs of various U.S. real property interests. [Previously, [Redacted] ran these thru her personal account – PNC Bank Compliance Department ordered the account closed.] Funds are received via wire transfers, usually from banks in Europe @ \$50,000 per transfer.

Credit: OCCRP

An "LLC Control Sheet" for GEGI Management LLC describes the company's purpose as holding an "administrative bank account" for the Barzani's U.S. property holdings.

## How Mustafa Barzani is Tied to GEG

**There are no publicly available corporate records that would definitively establish the owners of any of the GEG entities, whether in the United States or in Kurdistan. But the leaked documents point repeatedly to Mustafa Barzani as the man behind them.**

### *Golden Eagle Global (Kurdistan)*

The main GEG entity in Kurdistan, usually referred to as Golden Eagle Global, is also named "GEG Kurdistan" in the leaked documents.



tax issues, states that funds were regularly transferred from Kurdistan to GEGI Management. In the memo, Moore wrote that “Mustafa is the sole owner of GEGI,” and describes the company as “a vehicle for paying out family expenses.”

While the 2020 memo did not name the Kurdish entity that sent the funds, an earlier memo from Moore identifies GEG Kurdistan as the source of transfers to the United States.

Mustafa appears to have used this structure to pay for at least three properties, worth over \$10 million. In the case of Casa Divina, for instance, tax preparation documents from Moore’s law firm show that the funding was disclosed as a foreign gift. Banking documents show the money was routed through an account held by Moore’s law firm which was identified in internal documents as holding GEGI funds.

According to leaked documents, GEGI Management also handled many of the family’s other personal expenses, including hospital bills, designer clothes and handbags, and jewelry. In 2012, GEGI Management’s account was used to pay off tens of thousands of dollars in charges on American Express “Black Cards” – a credit card reserved for very wealthy clients – held by Masrour Barzani and other brothers. In 2023, the account was used to pay a \$41,000 bill to a nanny placement agency on behalf of Waysi Barzani.

Masrour Barzani’s lawyers declined to comment on specific financial transactions, but noted on the topic of money being transferred from Iraqi Kurdistan that “lawful commercial financial activity by businesses and individuals requires currency traders, or other third parties.”

## **Golden Eagle’s Sweetheart Deals**

Back in Iraqi Kurdistan, Golden Eagle was pursuing potentially lucrative business opportunities by positioning itself as a politically connected intermediary – typically while not having to invest any money of its own – according to the leaked documents.



inc., the Delaware company, and other times simply to “Golden Eagle Global” without making the legal entity clear.)

While only four of the contracts were signed, emails seen by reporters describe work done under a further half-dozen agreements – including a deal to supply military helmets to a Kurdish security agency. The draft contracts and accompanying correspondence shed light on Golden Eagle’s role when partnering with foreign investors.

In several draft contracts, Golden Eagle positioned itself as an intermediary between three companies seeking projects in the region’s oil sector, which brings in billions of dollars in revenues a year, and the Kurdistan Regional Government. These deals were structured so the foreign firms would finance the projects, while Golden Eagle would provide government and administrative support and receive fees or a share of the profits.

In August 2013, for instance, Golden Eagle executive Cupp asked Moore to review draft agreements and memorandums of understanding with Euroil, a Turkish company. The deal involved refining crude oil supplied from Iraqi Kurdistan’s biggest oil fields, as well as storing and trading petroleum products.

In his legal analysis of the deal’s terms, Moore noted that Euroil would be “putting up all the money, buying the land, building the refinery infrastructure ... and, in short, running the entire operations.”

“GEG,” he wrote, would provide “professional and official contacts and connections” and “administrative support” and make sure the “project has all the official backing and approvals to ensure success.”

The documents do not specify what fees Golden Eagle would receive, and reporters were unable to verify whether the deal was ever concluded. In late August, Cupp wrote in an email that the project was “on hold temporarily,” but there were no further updates. Cupp did not reply to requests for comment.

A few months later, in October 2013, Moore reviewed another draft agreement – this time one that would allow a Belize-incorporated company called IMOCO to export Iraqi Kurdish crude and oil products.



petroleum. in exchange for access to as much as 30,000 metric tons of oil per month, Golden Eagle would receive a yet-to-be-determined fee for each ton exported.

Reporters were unable to find any public information indicating whether the deal was concluded. They were also unable to determine who owned IMOCO, which was dissolved in 2023, since Belize keeps company ownership information secret. (In one email, Moore wrote that the jurisdiction didn't "exactly enhance confidence.")

In another draft memorandum of understanding from January 2014, Golden Eagle proposed taking a 50-percent stake in a joint venture with investment group TSG Global Holdings, to work on a variety of infrastructure and oil and gas projects.

The draft memorandum described Golden Eagle as having a "broad range of influential contacts" and being "well-placed." This wording was then deleted and replaced with wording saying that it "has extensive knowledge... and a wide range of industry contacts."



### Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding is agreed between TSG Global Holding, through its global resources, Associated Companies, Partners, Affiliates, Subsidiaries and alliances, represented by its Founder, Chairman and CEO, Dr. Rubar Sandi (hereinafter together referred to as "TSG") and

Golden Eagle Global, with registered office at ~~Khanzad Street 213, in~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq, represented by its Chairman and CEO,  
~~Ameer Ahmed His Excellency, Mr. Mustafa Barzani~~ (hereinafter referred to as "GEG").

TSG and GEG being collectively referred to as the "Parties", and each separately a "Party"

#### RECITALS:-

- 1) WHEREAS the Parties have identified a number of real estate, oil and gas, and infrastructure projects in Kurdistan ~~Projects~~ (the "Projects"); And,
- 2) WHEREAS ~~GEG~~ has vast experience in real estate, media, oil and gas, and infrastructure development projects in Kurdistan; And,
- 3) WHEREAS TSG has extensive knowledge and experience in large and complex development projects that require international resources and experience; And,
- 4) Whereas GEG has extensive knowledge of and experience in the Kurdistan marketplace and ~~enjoys a wide broad range of influential industry contacts well-placed~~; And,



was not clear if any deals resulted from the agreement. (In his 2014 U.S. tax return, Waysi declared a \$90,000 salary from an affiliate of TSG Global. OCCRP wrote to Waysi Barzani, GEGI and TSG Global, asking why he received this salary, but received no reply.)

Outside the oil sector, Golden Eagle also brokered the sale of 100 military helmets, made by the U.S. company Propper, to Iraqi Kurdistan's [Counter Terrorism Department](#). The next year, emails show Golden Eagle working to sell the Kurdish government 1,400 more of the helmets, though it is not clear if the deal went through. Propper did not reply to a request for comment.

Other emails show Golden Eagle hiring consultants in 2014 to help identify drones that could be sold to the same unit, trying to set up a factory to produce uniforms for the peshmerga, and negotiating with a Tennessee-based company to help it get licensed for mine clearing operations in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Neither Golden Eagle nor Mustafa Barzani replied to questions from OCCRP about the discussed deals. Lawyers for Masrour Barzani also declined to comment. Euroil, Propper, and the other companies referred to as having negotiated deals with Golden Eagle also did not respond to OCCRP's questions.

## Another Kurdish Money Source

The leaked documents also reveal the Barzani family's links to another Iraqi Kurdish conglomerate.

Ster Group was set up in 2002 by Sarwar Pedawi, an Iraqi Kurd who grew up partly in the Netherlands. After Saddam Hussein was toppled the following year, Ster's business boomed. Among other ventures, the company [has said](#) it became the exclusive local distributor for Coca Cola products, set itself up as the region's first internet provider, and built Erbil's first skyscraper. It also claimed projects in the oil and pharmaceutical sectors.



unable to obtain Kurdistan corporate records that would confirm the company's current owners.)

Pedawi has served as an economic policy adviser to then-President Masoud Barzani, but there has long been speculation that the Barzanis' ties to Ster ran deeper. A 2008 U.S. State Department cable, leaked years later, [cited a source](#) claiming that Masrour Barzani was the company's hidden majority shareholder. (His lawyers told OCCRP that the cable was "antiquated speculation... based on an entirely false premise.")

Moore's leaked emails show that Ster Group or its top representatives provided over \$18 million in funding used to purchase property and cover expenses for the Barzani brothers. Wire transfer receipts and bank statements document \$7.2 million of these transfers, while letters drafted by Moore's law office reference a further \$11.1 million from Ster.

In one December 2008 email to Moore, GEG Inc.'s then-Vice President Laura Geho described Ster as "Masrour Barzani's overseas company" and said it would be paying for an apartment in McLean, Virginia on his behalf. A draft letter from the time, prepared by Moore's office for Pedawi's signature, stated that Ster Group and the Delaware-registered company purchasing the property — owned by Masrour — were "under common control."



EN

Hi Jonathon,

We are in need of a relatively simple document that would create a paper trail to link One Park Crest Unit [REDACTED] LLC with Masrou Barzani's overseas company that will be making his cash payment wire transfer on his behalf. I am thinking along the lines of a simple agreement that states Ster Group FZE, P.O. Box 214079, Dubai, United Arab Emirates will be remitting a wire transfer on behalf of One Park Crest Unit [REDACTED] LLC for the settlement of a condominium located at 8220 Crestwood Heights Drive, [REDACTED] McLean, VA 22102 USA. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The CEO of Ster Group, Sarwar Pedawi, is available to sign on their behalf, and I, as the Manager of One Park Crest Unit 1906, LLC, will be signing on the LLC's behalf. Please let me know if anything further will be needed to draft this type of document.

In addition, I noticed I am lacking any official certificates for the BVI companies. Do such documents exist? I only have the applications we submitted and the email stating they had been approved. Please let me know if there is anything solid I might be missing.

Best regards,  
Laura  
[REDACTED]

Credit: OCCRP

In a December 2008 email, a senior GEGI executive describes Kurdish conglomerate Ster Group as being "Masrou Barzani's overseas company."

## Impulse Energy

**Reporters found that GEGI Management received a payment from a company involved in a high-profile and controversial oil deal that involved territory contested between Iraqi Kurdistan and the federal Iraqi government.**

The payment came from Impulse Energy Corporation, a company run by Sarwar Pedawi and his brother Laween — the same brothers behind Ster Group, which had transferred millions of dollars for the Republic of Kurdistan U.C. operations.

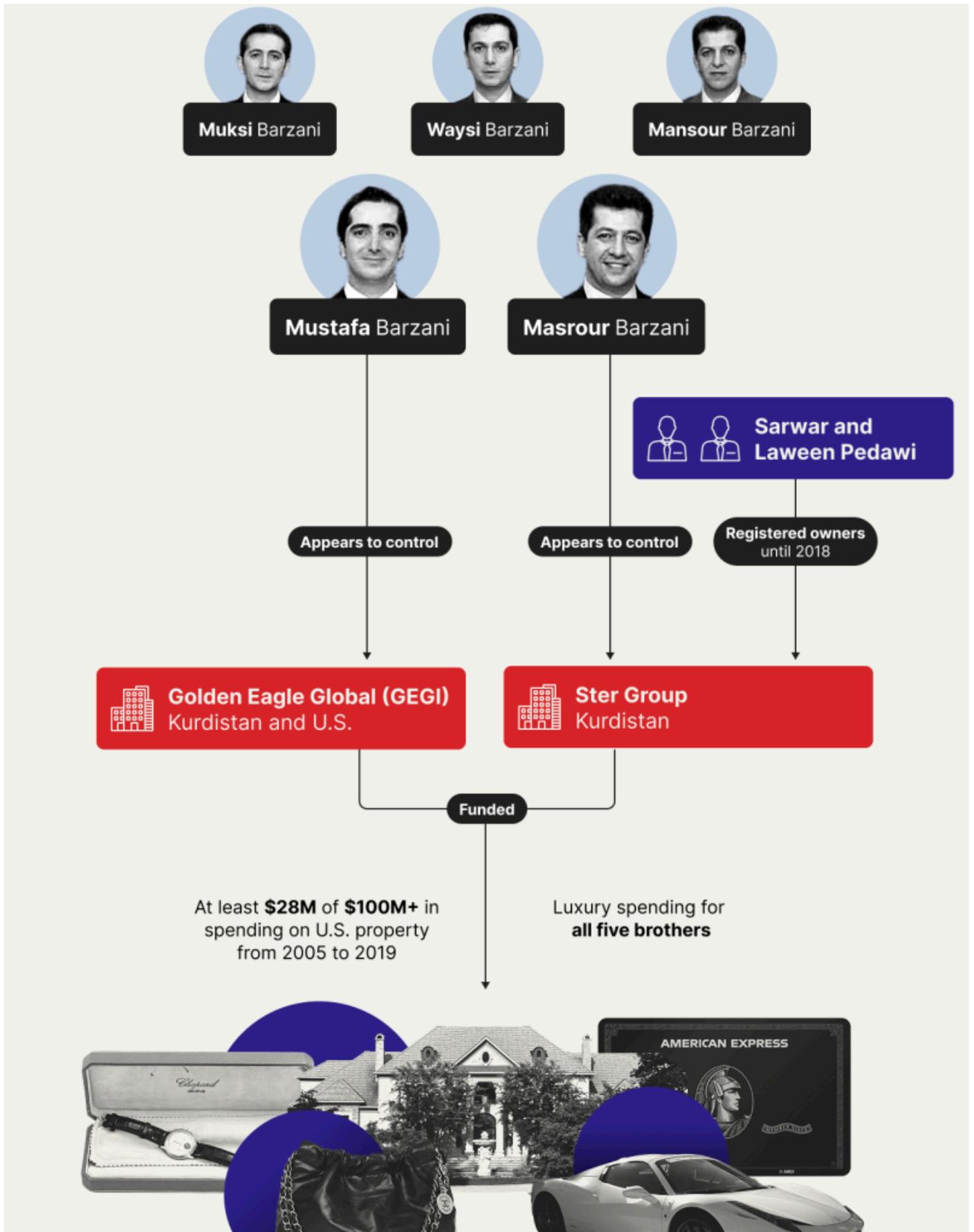
[Show more](#) ▾

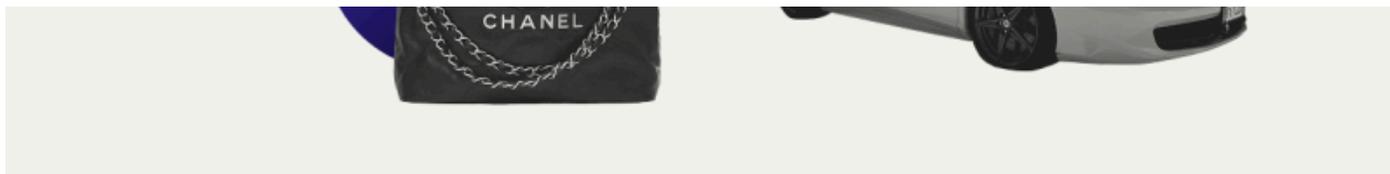
Ster Group also covered other high-end purchases for other brothers, including expensive crystal decorative objects by Lalique and a \$340,000 Ferrari for Mustafa.

**EN**

In October 2010, a company registered in Virginia by Sarwar Pedawi and his brother Laween bought a \$10.2 million home in McLean, Virginia, built in the style of a 15th-century French chateau. While neither Barzani brother was named in the property records, Moore's leaked billing files show that the cost of renovations at the property in June 2019 were charged to Masrour Barzani. Earlier communications about the property used the subject line "Masrour."

In 2024 the home was transferred – at no cost – to an anonymously owned Virginia company called Cove Hollow, according to Virginia property records. The absence of a payment amount could indicate either a gift or shifting of assets between related companies. Moore's records show Muksi Barzani was billed for corporate administration for Cove Hollow.





Credit: James O'Brien/OCCRP

Neither the lawyers for Masrour Barzani nor those for the Pedawi brothers addressed OCCRP's questions on the matter. Muksi Barzani did not reply to written questions.

On several occasions, Moore contacted Sarwar Pedawi to request funds on behalf of companies involved in the Barzanis' property purchases. He stated in these messages that the companies were "acting on behalf of Ster Group."

These include requests for nearly a million dollars for land in 2014, around \$232,000 to cover the closing costs of buying two commercial properties leased to Wendy's franchises that same year, and \$3.1 million for commercial property in Detroit in 2017.

In April 2014, Moore's assistant wrote that she had emailed Pedawi, requesting him to pay the legal fees for all five brothers.

In addition to funding specific deals, Ster Group also sent regular lump sum transfers – often \$100,000 or more – to GEGI Management, the U.S. company leaked documents described as created to handle the family's property related expenses.

Lawyers for Sarwar and Laween Pedawi said that the transfers were in no way connected to corruption. Echoing the position of Masrour Barzani's lawyers, they said that Ster Group was exchanging currencies and transferring dollars on behalf of the Barzanis or GEGI.

"Private money exchanges are the rule, not the exception, and are entirely lawful," said the Pedawis' lawyers. "All transfers made by our clients and/or their businesses were and are legal and in compliance with relevant regulations and good business practice."

The Pedawi brothers "are not and never have been 'fronts' for anyone or any organisation," they said, saying the same went for Ster Group. Sarwar Pedawi's "success is the result of hard work, vision, and a sharp analytical mind," the lawyers said. "Any suggestion to the contrary is an affront to his character, personal history and business reputation."



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