



Foto: Ida Eklund/Scanpix.

Azerbaijan center in new Telia corruption scandal

4:05 min  [My playlist](#)  [Share](#)

Published onsdag 27 maj 2015 kl 08.50

Azerbaijan's presidential family is thought to have swindled the state out of the equivalent of SEK 6 billion, with the help of the telecom company TeliaSonera, according to an investigative report from Swedish Television's investigative program Uppdrag Granskning, news agency TT and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).

TeliaSonera, which is owned in part by the Swedish government, has been quiet about the details in the suspected corruption case, but according to SVT, TT and OCCRP, it seems that Telia got licenses and other permissions in exchange for its participation.

Lars Hammar, an experienced economic crimes investigator, says that the whole thing "smells like corruption" and that "alarm bells should have rang a long time ago at TeliaSonera."

This could be the biggest corruption case in Swedish history.

In 2008, one of Telia's holding companies bought the Azerbaijani state's share of the telecom operator Azercell at an extreme discount: for USD 180 million, instead of the market value of USD 785 million. In spite of the bargain, the Telia sphere consciously handed over the whole purchase to a local partner, Cenay Iletisim, linked to the president's daughters, and judging by appearances, without the partner having to spend a penny. The purchase was financed by Telia's company and the local partner got paid back in dividends from the common activities.

The partner connected to the president's daughters has, since 2008, earned dividends of around SEK 2 billion. According to agreement, it also had the right to be bought out by Telia's company - and that was for the market price, SEK 6.8 billion, according to Telia's latest annual report.

By a low estimate, the affair is worth at least SEK 6 billion for the company that has been connected to the president.

Confidential internal documents show that Telia, in secret, negotiated for four years with at least two partners with personal connections to the regime, via a shell company in Panama. In a draft of an agreement, it is written that Telia's company will make sure to get all permissions and licenses that the rules require, before and after the acquisition. In a memo, it is made clear that Telia will be able to buy out its partner if the authorities jeopardize Azercells GSM license.

Einar Häckner, a professor emeritus in business economy believes that Telia actively contributed to the presidential family taking over state assets.

"It can be corruption, breach of trust, embezzlement and/or theft. And for Telia Sonera's part, complicity in such criminality," says Häckner.

"We thought it was a lot in the Uzbekistan affair - SEK 2 billion - but this is a sum that one could only dream about," he adds.

Experts believe that a criminal investigation should be started, but Telia has not filed a police report about the affair, despite having let a law firm investigate the activity throughout the region after the Uzbekistan scandal, and Häckner believes it is unlikely that this would have gone unnoticed.
