

IAMI

Investigator of the Year 2010

This year's investigation sounds like something out of a James Bond movie: A nearly new, \$560,000 Ferretti 46 based in Rovinj, Croatia was reported stolen by its Russian owner, a powerful oligarch with homes all over the world. The yacht was fully equipped with radar, autopilot, GPS, and two Volvo 480 diesels.

It was clear the marina and the local police had little idea of who had taken this vessel or where it might have gone. Our investigator of the year began by circulating a full description of the missing vessel and arranging for local inquiries to be carried out in Croatia. Day by day, the network of information concerning this vessel was gradually *and widely* dispersed. It paid off.

Around three weeks into the investigation, a call was received from the Ferretti agent in Beirut, Lebanon. He had received an inquiry from a Kuwaiti who had expressed interest in buying a Ferretti 46 -- just like the one that had been stolen. The agent expected to view the vessel shortly in Syria. He said he 'smelt a rat' and, knowing of the circulation, suggested that it might be the missing yacht.

It was. The yacht had been shipped to Syria on a coaster named *Boka Star*, which had mysteriously been purchased by a Montenegro warlord. The ship had already caused a stir within intelligence circles, as it would typically leave Croatia and steam around the Mediterranean with a cargo of high-end luxury goods bound for various Middle Eastern ports.

This discovery by the Beirut dealer meant the investigation was on the right track. The next step was to organize the police and Syrian authorities to intervene, but working with different jurisdictions is never easy, so it was decided to contact a maritime attorney based in Cyprus who understood the Syrian legal system. The work to arrest the ship started immediately.

The attorney gained the appropriate court papers before the vessel could be offloaded. Then, using the Russian owner's considerable clout, the vessel was returned.

As a follow up to this recovery, it came as something of a surprise to hear that the Croatian authorities had subsequently arrested the *Boka Star* in Pula and discovered several containers on board that contained MIG jet engines, surface to air missiles and a large assortment of other military hardware. The vessel was arrested and subsequently departed from Croatia devoid of its cargo. Surprisingly, it later emerged again with a new name, still under the same ownership, doing the same rounds with much the same cargo!

Congratulations to the 2010 IAMI Investigator of the Year:

Peter Clark of C Claims, London, England