

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024034325677 As former Defense Minister Akis Tsochatzopoulos prepares to spend the Orthodox Easter weekend in a police cell, a 103-page prosecutors' report has provided shocking evidence of an extensive money-laundering network that appears to have financed a life of luxury. According to the report by prosecutors Evgenia Kyvelou and Eleni Siskou, the 73-year-old minister has pocketed millions of euros in under-the-table payments for defense procurements since 1997, with the frequency of illicit transactions peaking between 1999 and 2002. These activities were concealed with the help of close associates who ran three offshore companies to hide the money, some of which was used to buy the ex-minister's array of assets, the report said. The report lists all the transactions, including the names of the financial institutions involved. Millions of euros' worth of deposits in several European banks, including 16.2 million Swiss francs (or 13.5 million euros) in Switzerland, have been linked to the procurement of Tor M1 missiles. The three implicated offshore firms -- Cyprus-based Torcaso, Liberia-based Nobilis and US-based Blue Bell -- all belonged to Tsochatzopoulos, according to the report, but were run by close associates including his first cousin, Nikolaos Zigras, also a former minister. Zigras is to face an investigating magistrate on Tuesday, as is the entrepreneur Giorgos Sachpatzidis and Efrosini Lambropoulou, an accountant and representative of one of the three offshore firms. A fourth suspect, Asterios Economidis, head of one of the offshore companies, testified before a magistrate Thursday. The money laundering was conducted chiefly through the purchase of properties in Athens, according to the report, which notes that the transactions traced are believed to be only a fraction of those carried out over a decade or so. One example is the purchase of the ex-minister's luxurious home on Dionysiou Areopagitou Street in central Athens. The neoclassical building was purchased in 2010 by Tsochatzopoulos's wife, Vassiliki Stamati, for 1.38 million euros though it had previously belonged to Torcaso and Nobilis, two of the offshore companies listed in Tsochatzopoulos's name. In a related development Thursday, Tsochatzopoulos's daughter, Areti, denied media reports that gold bars were found at her home. She said that police seized 10 pieces of gold leaf, which weigh 99 grams each and are worth a total of 29,000 euros, as well as nine 1935 gold sovereigns that she inherited from her grandfather. Tsochatzopoulos's wife and daughter could also face charges in connection to the probe into the veteran politician's property dealings.