

Reform UK

Senior Reform UK figures attend launch of How to Launder Money book

Co-author George Cottrell is close aide to party leader Nigel Farage and served several months in US prison



George Cottrell, left, and Lawrence Burke Files at the launch of their book, How to Launder Money, at the Raffles hotel in London. Photograph: x.com/BitebackPub

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As a choice for a book title, How to Launder Money certainly caught the eye. But then again, its co-author George Cottrell claims to know what he's talking about.

A **close aide to Nigel Farage**, Cottrell served several months in a US prison after being convicted there in 2017 for wire fraud - a chapter in his life he referred to at his book launch party on Thursday night.

Farage was among the guests at the luxury hotel Raffles on Whitehall, along with many senior members of **Reform UK**, but for once the party's leader was content to let the spotlight fall on Cottrell and his co-author Lawrence Burke Files.

One attender said: "George did clarify: 'There's nothing in this book that will assist money launderers or criminals. And he had a funny joke along the line that he did extensive research for the book, though unfortunately a lot of it is held by the FBI.'"

Published by Biteback, owned by Lord Ashcroft, the book is subtitled: A Guide for Law Enforcement, Prosecutors and Policymakers. Its promotional text reads: "The criminals already know how to launder money; this is, in part, their inside story."

Those attending the event included the Reform MP Richard Tice, the party's treasurer, Nick Candy, and its **London** mayoral candidate, Laila

Cunningham.



📷 The GB News presenter and former Brexit party MEP Martin Daubney arrives at Raffles hotel for the book launch. Nigel Farage was among the guests. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Guardian

They were joined by a number of Reform staffers, the GB News presenter and former Brexit party MEP Martin Daubney and James Orr, the Cambridge University philosophy professor and senior adviser to Farage.

“How to Launder Money offers a peek behind the wizard’s curtain to see the bent levers of finance and how they are pulled,” Cottrell and Burke Files write in an introduction, which describes anti-money laundering laws as “a convoluted failure” burdening legitimate businesses.

It cites the experience of Burke Files who’s working in finance for more than 40 years, most of it as an investigator and expert in due diligence. He is a former director of corporate finance for the investment bank American National.

As for Cottrell, the introduction says he was “exposed to the world of finance from a young age”, starting a career as a financier in London upon leaving school before he “caught the political bug” and in 2014 began a long engagement with British and international politics.

“In 2016, George was arrested by IRS [the US Internal Revenue Service] officers at the Republican national convention, where he had flown with a group of leading British Brexiteers,” it adds. He was in the company of others, including Farage, then the leader of Ukip, when he was arrested while disembarking from a plane at Chicago’s O’Hare airport.

“The arrest related to charges dating back to his years in finance and allegations of a money laundering conspiracy,” it reads, noting that he served eight months in prison before his release with all but a single charge dropped. The Guardian **has previously reported** that prosecutors advised the judge in the case to offer Cottrell a light prison sentence because he had been willing to “provide federal agents additional information after his arrest” as part of a plea deal.

The book’s introduction adds: “More recently, George has worked as an international political consultant, developed his art collection and applied himself to philanthropy, while running his political consultancy Geostrategy.com.”

“Are we cheerleaders for crime? No. Quite the opposite,” it later states. The authors address law enforcement officers, who they “tip our hats to with our hands over our hearts”.

Farage himself is mentioned on one page, which refers to him in the context of a discussion about the consequences for politically exposed persons (PEPs) from banks’ “de-risking”, which involves financial institutions ending or limiting ties with other banks and clients or regions considered high risk for money laundering.

Describing Farage as “a central figure in the Brexit process”, it relates how he had his account closed by Coutts, adding that it was later revealed that his political views and status as a PEP influenced the decision.

De-banking has gone from being a result of money-laundering risks to a result of social belief systems, write Cottrell and Burke Files.

“Not even Orwell could have imagined this; the slope gets slipperier by the day,” they add.

Burke Files told the Guardian that the book was about having a conversation about money laundering, and sharing what the criminals already know about laundering money with law enforcement and the public.

“It’s also a call to review the failures and perverse impacts they have had on people, finance and international development. We hope it will be a catalyst to start the discussions to make a difference,” he said.

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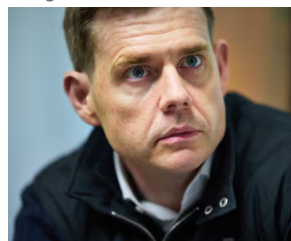
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