

## Kalashnikov sets sights on Aim listing

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The Kalashnikov Joint Stock Vodka Company (1947), whose backers include entrepreneurs Jim Mellon and Lawrence Staden, is planning to float on London's Alternative Investment Market within two years.

The company, named after its honorary chairman, former Red Army tank commander and gun designer General Mikhail Kalashnikov, revealed the listing plans as part of its move to raise £1m (€1.5m) from existing and new investors to fund its expansion and efforts to create a global vodka brand.

It is planning to list on London's junior market within two years, before selling the business a year later. It has 98 shareholders, of whom Staden, founder of hedge fund GLC Capital, and Mellon, a backer of Charlemagne Capital, are among the biggest.

John Florey, managing director of Kalashnikov, said the Aim flotation will enable its backers to sell their investments while also helping to establish a value for the company ahead of a potential trade sale.

He said the company, which is looking for retained financial advisors, has secured £325,000 in funding from existing backers ahead of an August 18 deadline. Florey said: "Vodka is an element in one in every four alcoholic drinks in the world and consumption is increasing. With a limited number of established brands internationally we are hopeful of success in developed and emerging markets."

The company, which exports vodka to nine countries, was forced to change the name of the product after the UK drinks industry's self-regulatory body found last year that it indirectly suggested associations with "violent and dangerous behaviour" because of its links to the make of gun.

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