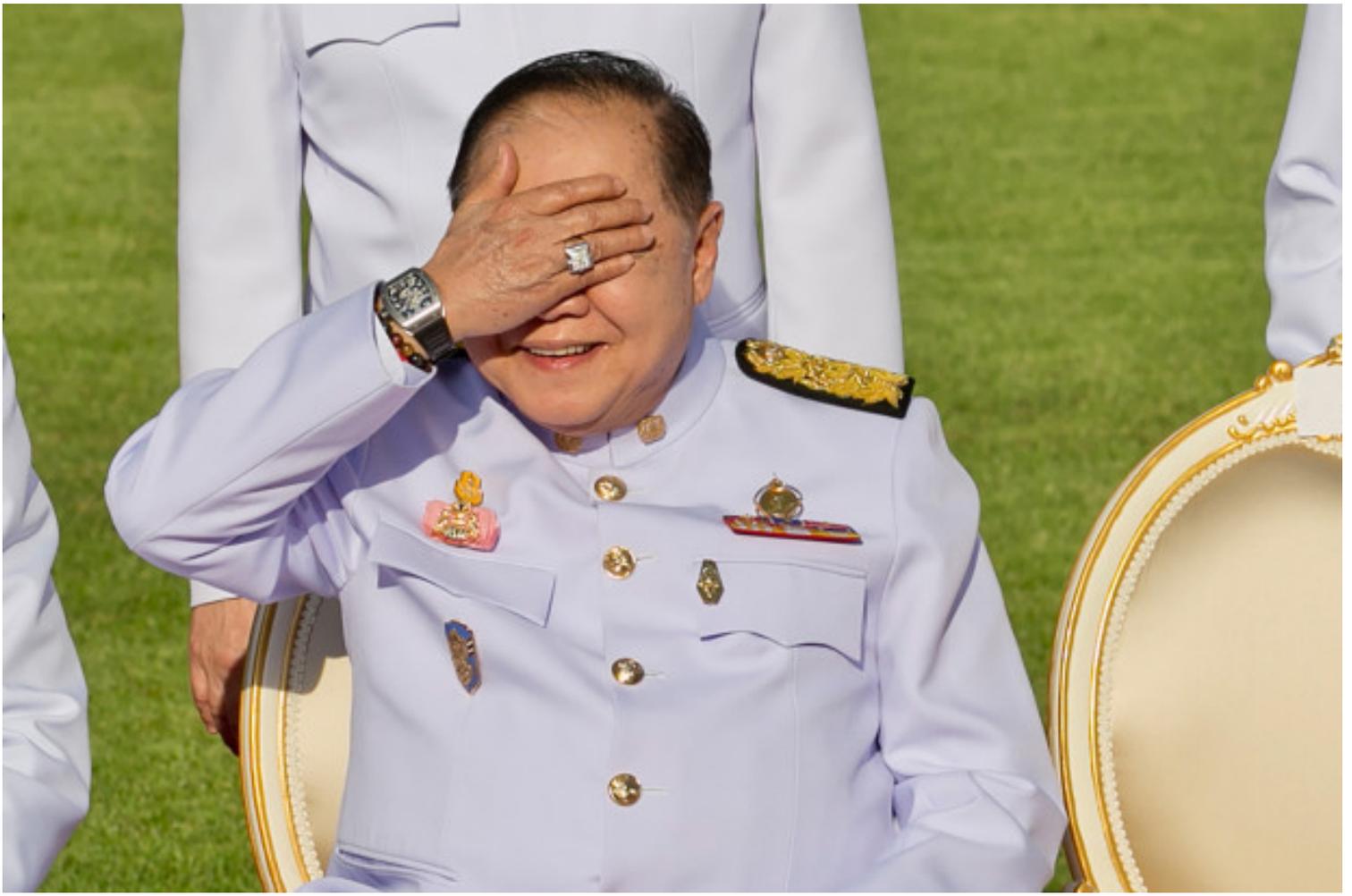


FASHION

Why power-hungry men love luxury watches

By Leslie Albrecht, Marketwatch

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The \$100,000 watch spotted on the wrist of the Thai deputy prime minister has touched off a corruption scandal — but sometimes timepieces aren't just about money.

Thailand's General Prawit Wongsuwan has taken heat after photographs revealed his extensive collection of luxury watches, **estimated to be worth \$1.2 million.**

Aside from a flashy display of wealth, some watches communicate another message: power.

That was the finding of a study on why consumers choose products with “wide faces,” such as certain saucer-sized luxury watches. Consumers prefer them when they want to feel dominant, especially when they’re negotiating with a competitor, [researchers at the University of Kansas and University of Toronto found](#).

The Thai general may soon find himself in need of a similar psychological edge. The Bangkok Post is [calling for his resignation](#), and some observers say the entire government [could unravel over the ill-timed controversy](#).

Wongsuwan is a member of a military junta that assumed control of the country with promises to wipe out corruption. His luxury watch collection has been widely condemned by the public, with critics questioning how he can afford the watches on his civil servant salary.

But Wongsuwan’s watches aren’t as opulent as some, said Laurent Martinez, owner of [Laurent Fine Watches](#) in Greenwich, Conn. If Wongsuwan’s entire collection is 25 watches worth \$1.2 million, that means the average price of each watch is roughly \$48,000 — relatively small potatoes for high-end watches, Martinez said.

“I understand that people can be furious about these crazy prices, but in the world of wealth and collection, these prices of \$40,000 to \$60,000 are reasonable,” Martinez said. “In the world of super collectors and super rich guys, it’s not that much money. Some of my clients have collections worth \$50 or \$60 million.”

The watch that sparked the scandal is a \$100,000 Richard Mille RM29. The brand is considered the Formula One race car of the watch world because of its “amazing” high-tech features and materials, Martinez said.

As for the rest of Wongsuwan’s timepieces, they’re impressive, but not show-stoppers, Martinez said. Crowd-sourcing analysis of photos of Wongsuwan revealed he’s worn several Rolexes, a Patek Philippe and an Audemars Piguet.

Wongsuwan’s watches appear to all be contemporary models. But serious watch fans usually own some vintage pieces — like the 48-year-old Rolex that once belonged to actor Paul Newman and [sold for more than \\$17 million last year](#).

“I wouldn’t consider him a collector because, if he was a collector, he would have more older watches,” Martinez said.