ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION
Safran v. Erik Doemling, Vision X
Case No. DAI2026-0063

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Safran, France, represented by Ebrand France, France.

The Respondent is Erik Doemling, Vision X, Germany, self-represented.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <safran.ai> is registered with NameCheap, Inc. (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on June 22, 2026. On June 22, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On June 23, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Privacy service provided by Withheld for Privacy ehf) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on June 23, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on June 26, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Policy" or "UDRP"), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Supplemental Rules").

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on June 29, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was July 19, 2026. On July 17, 2026, the Respondent requested an additional four calendar days in which to respond to the Complaint as per paragraph 5(b) of the Rules. On July 20, 2026, the Center granted the automatic four-day Response extension until July 23, 2026. The Response was filed with the Center on July 24, 2026.

The Complainant filed a Supplemental Filing on July 28, 2026. The Respondent filed a Supplemental Filing on July 31, 2026, and sent an email communication to the Center on August 4, 2026.

The Center appointed John Swinson, Alexandre Nappey, and W. Scott Blackmer as panelists in this matter on August 19, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. Each member of the Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a high-technology group that operates in the aviation, defense, and space markets. The Complainant has more than 110,000 employees and had revenue of more than EUR 31.3 billion in 2025. The Complainant is listed on NYSE Euronext Paris and is part of the French stock market index CAC 40.

In September 2024, the Complainant acquired a company called Preligens that specialized in artificial intelligence (AI) for aerospace and defense and announced at that time that Preligens would be renamed Safran.AI.

The Complainant owns a portfolio of trademark registrations including:

- European Union Trade Mark No. 004535209 for SAFRAN registered on August 17, 2009; and
- European Union Trade Mark No. 019066797 for SAFRAN.AI registered on March 19, 2025.

The Complainant owns domain names including <safran.fr>, <safranai.ai>, and <safranai.com>. The Complainant's website is located at "www.safran-group.com".

The Respondent is an individual from Germany.

The disputed domain name was registered on April 8, 2025. When the Complaint was filed in June 2026, the disputed domain name resolved to a website offering the disputed domain name for sale. The Complainant provided evidence that the disputed domain name was also listed for sale via GoDaddy for more than EUR 34 million and via the Registrar for USD 40 million.

At the date of this Decision, the disputed domain name does not resolve to an active website.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

In summary, the Complainant makes the following submissions.

The disputed domain name is identical or, at the very least, confusingly similar to the Complainant's SAFRAN and SAFRAN.AI trademarks and related domain names. The ".ai" extension is particularly significant in the present case. The Complainant is the holder of the company name "SAFRAN.AI", registered with the Paris Trade and Companies Register. The Complainant is also the owner of the SAFRAN.AI trademark and related domain names, including <safranai.ai>.

Internet searches for the terms "safran" and "safran.ai" exclusively refer to the Complainant, its trademarks, and its activities.

The SAFRAN trademark is distinctive and internationally well known. The Complainant is a global leader in the aerospace and defense sectors. Safran has a global presence, with more than 110,000 employees in 276 locations across 27 countries, and generated revenue of EUR 31.3 billion in 2025.

The disputed domain name only redirects to a webpage offering it for sale. This clearly demonstrates that the purpose of this registration is not to use the disputed domain name to operate it within the framework of a commercial project or business idea. There is no intent of commercial use from the Respondent.

The disputed domain name is listed for sale on several platforms for exorbitant amounts, which demonstrate that the disputed domain name was registered primarily for the purpose of selling it for valuable consideration in excess of the Respondent's documented out-of-pocket costs directly related to the disputed domain name. UDRP panels have consistently held that the registration of a domain name corresponding to a third party's trademark for speculative resale purposes does not establish rights or legitimate interests.

Given that SAFRAN is an internationally well-known trademark and that the Complainant is a leading aerospace and defense group with substantial commercial resources, it is highly unlikely that the Respondent was unaware of the Complainant in setting such an exorbitant asking price. The amount demanded appears calculated to take unfair advantage of the reputation and value associated with the SAFRAN and SAFRAN.AI trademarks.

B. Respondent

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied the second and third elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

In summary, the Respondent makes the following submissions.

The disputed domain name was registered by a person not related to the present proceeding and this registration lapsed. On April 8, 2025, Mr […] acquired the disputed domain name in a public expired-domain auction on Namecheap marketplace for USD 5,433. Mr […] shortly thereafter listed the disputed domain name for sale.

On around June 15, 2025, Mr […] and the Respondent entered into a loan agreement. The Respondent loaned Mr […] the amount of EUR 25,000, at 5 percent interest, secured by transfer of the disputed domain name and another domain name <to.ai> to the Respondent. Thus, the Respondent became the registered holder of the disputed domain name for Policy purposes on June 20, 2025. However, Mr […] retained management access to the disputed domain name during the security period.

On May 22, 2026, Mr […] and the Respondent agreed to cancel the loan agreement. Rather than repaying the loan, the disputed domain name and the other domain name <to.ai> were to remain with the Respondent in lieu of repayment.

"Safran" is the ordinary German word for saffron (crocus sativus), the spice. The Complainant's evidence shows that it does not hold the term exclusively.

"safran.ai" has an obvious ordinary meaning — an artificial-intelligence application to do with saffron — that has nothing to do with the Complainant, so the string does not necessarily refer to it.

Registering, holding and reselling domain names made up of ordinary dictionary words can give rise to rights or legitimate interests, so long as the domain name was not taken in order to target a trademark owner.

The Respondent accepted the disputed domain name as security for a loan because "safran" is a short German word for an expensive spice. It is legitimate to obtain a domain name as part of a security transaction based on the value of the domain name itself. Rights or legitimate interests can exist in a dictionary-word domain name where there is no evidence that the holder sought to trade on someone else's trademark. The Respondent was not aware of the Complainant at the time he accepted the disputed domain name as security for the loan.

The Respondent did not offer the disputed domain name for sale after it was transferred to him as security.

6. Discussion and Findings

To succeed, the Complainant must demonstrate that all of the elements enumerated in paragraph 4(a) of the Policy have been satisfied, namely:

(i) the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights;

(ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name; and

(iii) the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

The onus of proving these elements is on the Complainant.

Paragraph 15(a) of the Rules directs the Panel to decide the Complaint on the basis of the statements and documents submitted and in accordance with the Policy, these Rules and any rules and principles of law that it deems applicable.

6.1. Supplemental Filings

Both the Complainant and the Respondent filed Supplemental Filings.

Paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Rules grant the Panel sole discretion to determine the admissibility of unsolicited supplemental filings. While paragraph 10(d) states that: "The Panel shall determine the admissibility, relevance, materiality and weight of the evidence", paragraph 12 provides that: "In addition to the complaint and the response, the Panel may request, in its sole discretion, further statements or documents from either of the Parties". As a general matter, unsolicited supplemental filings are generally discouraged, unless specifically requested by the panel.

Part of the Complainant's Supplemental Filing relates to the loan arrangement between Mr […] and the Respondent. This is information that was not known to the Complainant prior to filing the Complaint. The Respondent does not object to the Complainant's Supplemental Filing to the extent that it relates to the loan arrangement. The Panel accepts the Complainant's Supplemental Filing to the extent it relates to the loan arrangement only.

The balance of the Complainant's Supplemental Filing is material that the Complainant could have included in its Complaint. The Complainant has made no showing of exceptional circumstances. Consequently, the Panel does not consider the Complainant's Supplemental Filing nor that of the Respondent, other than to the extent these filings relate to the loan arrangement.

6.2. Substantive Issues

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("WIPO Overview 3.1"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.2.1.

The entirety of the SAFRAN mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is identical to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.7.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant's prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

There is no evidence of use of the disputed domain name or of the term "safran" by the Respondent.

The Respondent states that he accepted the disputed domain name as security for a loan because "safran" is a short German word for an expensive spice. The Respondent states that it is legitimate to obtain a domain name as part of a security transaction based on the value of the domain name itself. The Respondent also states that rights or legitimate interests can exist in a dictionary-word domain name where there is no evidence that the holder sought to trade on someone else's trademark.

There is nothing inherently wrongful in the business of purchasing and selling domain names or using domain names as security for a loan provided that there is no targeting or seeking to take advantage of the Complainant or its trademark. *typeguard, inc. v. Narendra Ghimire*, WIPO Case No. DAI2026-0029.

Panels have also recognized that merely registering a domain name comprised of a dictionary word or phrase does not by itself automatically confer rights or legitimate interests on the respondent. There is no evidence that before the notice of the dispute that the Respondent used the disputed domain name in connection with the relied-upon dictionary meaning.

Further, as discussed below in respect of the third element, the evidence before the Panel does not clearly demonstrate that the Respondent obtained the disputed domain name as part of a secured loan transaction based on the value of the disputed domain name as a German dictionary term.

In contrast, there is evidence before the Panel that the Complainant is a large multinational company with significant revenue and operating in Germany, suggesting (as discussed below) that the Respondent likely would have been aware of the value of the disputed domain name as a trademark at the relevant time.

The conduct of Mr […] is also relevant. Mr […], who appears to be a domain name investor, provided a signed statement for the purposes of this dispute that was included in the Response. Mr […] stated that at the time he won the auction for the disputed domain name, he was not aware of the Complainant. However, shortly after the auction he ran Internet searches to ascertain demand for the disputed domain name and became aware of the Complainant at that time. According to Mr […], these searches "confirmed to me the value of the domain name as an investment." Mr […] then listed the disputed domain name for sale. Mr […] did not explain why he used the disputed domain name as for security for a loan (as compared with other domain names in his portfolio). Mr […] said he agreed to surrender the disputed domain name rather than repaying the loan because he had been winding down his portfolio of ".ai" domain names and he believed that the artificial intelligence sector had peaked. Thus, at the time the Respondent entered into the loan agreement with Mr […] (in June 2025) and at the time the Respondent obtained full control of the disputed domain name (in May 2026), Mr […] was aware of the Complainant and the Complainant's impact on the value of the disputed domain name.

In short, the Panel does not consider that in the present case there is sufficient evidence for the Respondent to demonstrate that the disputed domain name is legitimately an investment or security because it is a dictionary term as contended by the Respondent.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

Generally speaking, a finding that a domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith requires an inference to be drawn that the respondent in question has registered and is using the disputed domain name to take advantage of its significance as a trademark owned by (usually) the complainant.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent's registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 3.2.1.

The Panel considers that an appropriate time to evaluate bad faith registration was at the time that the disputed domain name was transferred to the Respondent to hold as security for the loan (June 2025). For completeness, the Panel also evaluated bad faith registration at the time the Respondent agreed to acquire full control of the disputed domain name rather than accepting repayment of the loan (May 2026). As set out below, the Panel reaches the same conclusion in respect of both dates.

The Respondent considered that the disputed domain name along with one other domain name was worth at least EUR 25,000, both at the time of making the loan and the time that the security was transferred to the Respondent to pay off the loan. This was substantially more than the USD 5,433 price that Mr […] acquired the disputed domain name at auction in April 2025, two months before the loan. Mr […] had listed the disputed domain name for sale before the date of the loan.

The Respondent states that he did not offer the disputed domain name for sale after it was transferred to him as security. The Respondent states that Mr […] set the price for the disputed domain name and offered the disputed domain name for sale, and that the high price was to deter buyers. Mr […] states that he believed EUR 25,000 was "a realistic offer level" for the disputed domain name.

The Respondent states that he accepted the disputed domain name as part of a security package as collateral for a loan because it was an everyday German word for a fine spice, and not to target the Complainant. The Respondent accepted the disputed domain name for security knowing that it was listed for sale for a high price. The Respondent states that at the time of the loan he was not aware of the Complainant or its Safran.AI subsidiary and would not have accepted the disputed domain name as security of a loan if he had been aware of the Complainant's claim. However, the Respondent provided no evidence of the due diligence that he undertook when assessing the disputed domain name as appropriate security.

In the Panel's view, it is common practice for a lender to conduct due diligence investigations in relation to assets offered for a loan security, and that this is also a recognized practice where domain names are used for security. The Respondent states "had I actually known that a large corporation claimed this name for itself, I would not have accepted it as security at all" suggesting that such knowledge was relevant to the Respondent, but the Respondent provided no evidence of what due diligence he actually undertook, and if he did no such due diligence, then why not.

The failure of the Respondent to disclose what due diligence, if any, he undertook is particularly significant in circumstances where he has advanced substantial sums of money on the strength of the security (at least partly) provided by the registration of the disputed domain name. *BTSA Biotecnologias Aplicadas, S.L. v. Gregg Freeman, Domain Capital and Macrosten Ltd.*, WIPO Case No. D2018-1726.

Accepting the Respondent's narrative that he was not aware of the Complainant or its Safran.AI business, Mr […] acquired the disputed domain name at auction in April 2025 (for USD 5,433) and persuaded the Respondent that the disputed domain name plus one other domain name were sufficiently valuable assets to serve as security for a EUR 25,000 loan. The disputed domain name was subsequently advertised for sale for large sums, as much as USD 40 million at one point, although as stated above the Respondent suggests that figure was to deter buyers. Whoever authorized those sales listings, it is difficult to imagine that Mr. […] and the Respondent had no conversation about the reasons why the disputed domain name should prove to be particularly valuable or would be good security for a EUR 25,000 loan.

Further, the Panel notes that an Internet search on the term "safran", using a search engine set for the German region in the period May and June 2025, the leading results concerned the Complainant, not the spice – with links directly to the Complainant's website. An article specifically devoted to Safran.AI appeared within the first few screens of results, dated shortly before the loan agreement. It seems likely that the Respondent would be sufficiently interested in the potential value (and risks) associated with the disputed domain name to at least have a conversation about it and conduct a cursory Internet search on the term, which would reveal a potential trademark interest. Compare *Quester Group, Inc. v. Domain Capital*, WIPO Case No. D2010-0594.

Mr. […] provided a declaration that he was aware of the Complainant shortly after the auction in April 2025, and apparently prior to the security arrangements with the Respondent.

Accordingly, the Panel finds that it was likely that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant or its Safran.AI business at the time that the disputed domain name was transferred from Mr. […] to the Respondent to hold as security for the loan (June 2025).

In May 2026, Mr. […] and the Respondent agreed to a different arrangement. Rather than repaying the loan, Mr. […] transferred full control of the disputed domain name to the Respondent and cancelled the obligation on Mr. […] to repay the loan.

The Respondent states he was not aware of the Complainant in May or June 2025, but he does not say that he was not aware of the Complainant in May 2026 when Mr […] and the Respondent agreed that the loan be surrendered and the Respondent became full owner and took control of the disputed domain name. Mr […] was aware of the Complainant in May 2026. The Panel considers that in the circumstances of this case that May 2026 is also a relevant date to determine whether the disputed domain name was registered by the Respondent in bad faith.

Additionally, the disputed domain name when including the ".ai" Top-Level Domain is identical to the Complainant's trademark and business name Safran.AI. The Respondent did not convincingly explain why a ".ai" domain name is relevant to spices.

The Panel considers that paragraph 4(b)(i) of the Policy applies.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <safran.ai> be transferred to the Complainant.

/John Swinson/
John Swinson
Presiding Panelist

/Alexandre Nappey/
Alexandre Nappey
Panelist

/W. Scott Blackmer/
W. Scott Blackmer
Panelist
Date: September 2, 2026