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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

5 Jailed in Kaspersky Kidnapping

By Alexander Bratersky

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The Moscow City Court authorized on Monday the arrest of five people, including an elderly ex-convict, on suspicion of kidnapping the son of software tycoon Yevgeny Kaspersky to pay off their debts.

Ivan Kaspersky, 20, was freed by police over the weekend from the banya where he was held outside Moscow without a single gunshot fired, news reports said.

Rosbalt.ru identified the suspected ringleader as Nikolai Savelyev, 61, a man with a criminal record on unspecified charges, who was allegedly aided by his wife, Lyudmila Savelyeva, 64, his son, also Nikolai, 29, and two of the son's friends.

The Savelyevs decided to kidnap the son of Yevgeny Kaspersky — whose wealth is put at $800 million by Forbes Russia — to pay off a bank loan, Rosbalt.ru added, citing an unidentified law enforcement source. Earlier reports put the ransom at 3 million euros ($4.3 million).

Ivan Kaspersky was kidnapped on his way to work in northwestern Moscow last Tuesday.

The captors put him in a banya on the premises of their house in the Moscow region under the guard of one of the younger gang members and proceeded to contact Yevgeny Kaspersky by cell phone to demand the ransom, Interfax said.

Investigators managed to determine the location of the banya by tracing the phone call, Interfax said. After that, they lured four suspects from the premises, asking them to collect a down payment on the ransom, but stopped them on the pretext of a routine document check and detained all four, including the younger Savelyev, who attempted to resist arrest, the report said. At the same time, police stormed the banya and freed Ivan Kaspersky unharmed.

Police also spread false information about the kidnapping to the media as part of the operation, which accounts for last week's conflicting reports, some of which claimed Yevgeny Kaspersky had refused to seek help from the police and had paid the ransom.

"Police officers working on the case were astonished with how stupid and audacious the kidnapping was," a police official told Interfax.

Monday's court ruling means that the five suspects will be held in custody while investigators decide whether to press kidnapping charges, which carry up to 15 years in prison.

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