

Spaniard Convicted of Yukos Subsidiary Theft

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A Moscow court has convicted a Spanish citizen in absentia on charges of embezzling \$13 billion from a subsidiary of the now-defunct Yukos oil company.

The conviction of Antonio Valdes-Garcia on Monday came despite imprisoned Yukos head Mikhail Khodorkovsky's testimony that he didn't know of any such embezzlement.

Valdes-Garcia, who has dual Russian-Spanish citizenship, escaped from house arrest in Russia in 2007 and is now in Spain. He headed a Yukos subsidiary called Fargoil.

Interfax said prosecutors are seeking a 13-year sentence.

Khodorkovsky was arrested in 2003 and convicted of embezzlement and tax fraud in prosecutions that supporters claim were Kremlin punishment for his funding of opposition parties. Yukos assets were auctioned off, much of them going to state oil company Rosneft.

Valdes-Garcia fled Russia in 2003, when the state case against Yukos began. He was charged

in absentia, but returned to Russia in 2005 to give evidence in exchange for being classified as a witness rather than a suspect.

He claimed Russian officials reneged on the deal and forced him to partially confess. He was placed under house arrest, during which time he said he received police threats that he should implicate Khodorkovsky and others. He claimed to have been severely beaten after he vowed to go public about the threats.

Valdes-Garcia said he filed a report saying he sustained the injuries in a fall from a window in exchange for promises he wouldn't suffer further violence.

But he escaped from house arrest in Moscow in January 2007 after reportedly locking his police guards inside his apartment.

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