

Britain 'Blacklists' Magnitsky Officials

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The  Moscow Times

Britain has secretly blacklisted at least 60 Russian officials implicated in the 2009 prison death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, a British media report said Sunday.

The move would replicate a measure taken by the United States in July that prompted the Russian Foreign Ministry to draw up a blacklist of U.S. officials in retaliation.

If the British move is confirmed, it could strain relations after a whistle-stop visit to Russia by Prime Minister David Cameron last month that saw the signing of \$340 million in business deals. The visit marked the highest-level British-Russian talks in Moscow since 2006.

The Observer newspaper reported that British officials introduced the blacklist secretly in order not to damage ties between Moscow and London. British lawmaker Chris Bryant said the visa ban had been confirmed to him by Immigration Minister Damian Green, the report said. "From conversations with Damian Green I took it that these people would not be welcomed, it seems now as if there is a secret ban on this list of people," Bryant was quoted as saying.

A spokesman for the British Embassy in Moscow did not respond to repeated calls to his cell

phone Sunday.

British-Russian relations sank to post-Soviet lows after the 2006 poisoning death of former FSB agent Alexander Litvinenko in London and the Russian government's subsequent refusal to extradite Britain's prime suspect, State Duma Deputy Andrei Lugovoi.

U.S. politicians, including Senator John McCain, have called on the British government to introduce visa bans and asset freezes on officials linked to Magnitsky's death.

Hermitage Capital, the investment fund that employed Magnitsky, said in a statement that the documents revealed by the Observer report show that "a number of government officials and Russian criminals named by Sergei Magnitsky as perpetrators of the \$230 million theft have regularly traveled to the U.K. in the last five years."

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