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MTS to Protest Uzbek Arrests, Raiding

By Rachel Nielsen

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Five MTS executives in Uzbekistan are currently under investigation, including acting general director Radik Dautov. **Maxim Stulov**

A Tashkent court has upheld an Uzbek government decision to revoke the telecommunications licenses of a Mobile TeleSystems subsidiary in Uzbekistan, while Uzbek tax authorities have lodged more than $900 million in tax-related charges against MTS-Uzbekistan, Mobile TeleSystems said.

Uzdunrobita, which is 100 percent owned by MTS, will appeal the Tashkent Economic Court's decision to cancel the licenses, MTS said Monday night. The mobile operator plans to appeal the tax sanctions in the next nine business days.

It said the actions by Uzbek officials "have all the signs of a corporate raider attack."

The latest measures follow weeks of increasingly harsh bureaucratic and law enforcement actions against MTS and its employees in the Central Asian nation.

Five MTS executives in Uzbekistan are now under investigation there, including acting general director and Russian citizen Radik Dautov, MTS said.

Dautov's wife and a handful of civic organizations had planned to picket the Uzbek Embassy on Tuesday. MTS said the protest was postponed after the number of expected participants exceeded the head count allowed by the protest permit.

Neither the press attache for the Uzbek Embassy in Moscow nor the Uzbekistan General Prosecutor's Office in Tashkent could be reached for comment.

MTS bought Uzdunrobita in 2004 for $371 million and has invested more than $1 billion in its development, according to Vedomosti and MTS.

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