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Polonsky Tells Lavrov 'Big Money' Behind His Detention

By Allison Quinn

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Real estate developer Sergei Polonsky, currently being held in a Cambodian prison following a scandalous New Year's celebration, told Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in an open letter published on Polonsky's blog on the Ekho Moskvy website that his detention is part of conspiracy.

In the letter, the former millionaire claims that on Jan. 26, while in prison, he and the two other Russians detained with him were visited by an employee of the Russian Consulate. According to Polonsky, the consulate employee said that "various sources" in Moscow had paid "big money" to ensure that the three men stayed behind bars for three years. He and his friends were also denied legal and political help and told that the Foreign Ministry could not provide assistance, he said.

Polonsky was arrested in Cambodia on Dec. 31, 2012 together with two of his friends, Russians Konstantin Baglai and Alexander Karachinsky. Cambodian investigators say that the Russian

businessmen threatened crew members of a rented yacht with a knife. According to Cambodian police, the Russians locked the crew members below deck and forced them to jump into the water and swim to shore. The Russians deny all charges. Shortly after the incident, Polonsky wrote on his Twitter page that the three men had been detained for shooting off fireworks and then refusing to present identification to the Cambodian military.

The letter also says that strong psychological pressure is being placed on the three men, and mentions a range of different measures "that can't even be put down on paper." In addition, Polonsky said that accurate information on the current situation is being withheld.

"Considering the unpredictability of this situation's development, the danger to our lives and our health, we ask for an immediate explanation of the situation," Polonsky wrote.

Earlier, Polonsky wrote a letter to Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk apologizing for what occurred on the yacht. In that letter, he also requested Cambodian citizenship so that he could invest in the country's economy and promised to give millions of dollars to reforming the local prison system.

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