

Browder Placed on International Wanted List

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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William Browder speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2011.

A Moscow court revealed Wednesday that Bill Browder, head of the Hermitage Capital investment fund, has been placed on an international wanted list in connection with an investigation into the embezzlement of Gazprom shares.

But in an embarrassment to prosecutors, the court refused to issue a warrant for his arrest in absentia, saying they had failed to make a reasonable effort to notify Browder about the court proceedings.

The decision to place Browder on the wanted list, made April 8, was disclosed by the Tverskoi District Court as it started hearings into a request by prosecutors to arrest Browder in absentia.

Under Russian law, a suspect cannot be arrested in absentia unless he is first put on an

international wanted list. After an arrest warrant is issued, Russian investigators pass the materials for the case over to Interpol.

But the likelihood of Browder facing actual arrest appears slim. Browder, who heads what was once the biggest foreign investment fund in Russia, is at loggerheads with the Russian government amid his successful campaign to blacklist Russian officials implicated in the death of Hermitage lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in 2009.

The U.S. announced Friday that several of those officials had been banned from entry into the U.S., and several European countries are looking to create blacklists of their own.

"This is a pure vendetta and everyone knows it," said Jamison Firestone, Magnitsky's former boss and a close associate of Browder in lobbying for the blacklists.

"If it was really illegal to buy Gazprom, every Western hedge fund manager in Moscow would already be on the way to the airport," he said Wednesday by e-mail.

Investigators have accused Browder of using his business to embezzle shares in state-controlled Gazprom at a cost of more than 3 billion rubles (\$100 million) to the state budget. Browder also faces accusations of tax evasion.

A prosecutor complained in court on Wednesday that the British Embassy and Interpol had not cooperated with the Russians in notifying Browder about the court proceedings. Asked whether prosecutors had attempted to notify Browder by posting a letter to his known address, he admitted that they had not.

The judge ordered prosecutors to try to notify Browder directly and scheduled the next hearing for April 22.

Browder is a British citizen and relocated to an office in Britain after being banned entry into Russia over national security concerns in 2005.

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