

First Businessmen Freed Under Amnesty Bill

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Thirteen entrepreneurs have been released from prisons and pretrial detention centers under the newly adopted business amnesty bill since it came into effect on July 4, although it is not likely to affect several high profile cases, the legislation's initiator, Boris Titov, said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

The amnesty was one of the first initiatives put forward by Titov, who was appointed business ombudsman by President Vladimir Putin a year ago to help fix Russia's investment climate.

"The amnesty is a systemic plan, it cannot be directed at individual prisoners. It is very difficult to pardon [Yukos founder Mikhail] Khodorkovsky and [anti-corruption blogger Alexei] Navalny," Titov said during a news conference.

Opposition leader and Moscow mayoral candidate Alexei Navalny was found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to five years in prison by a Kirov court Thursday, under an

article that is not included in the amnesty. It is theoretically possible for his crime to be reclassified to one that would allow him to be freed.

Titov also said that there were 13,600 people in the country convicted of economic crimes and that thousands would be released under the new bill.

The final version of the bill contains 27 articles that are covered by the amnesty, including fraud, premeditated bankruptcy and money laundering.

Putin supported the initiative, but warned that “real criminals” might take advantage of it. The terms of the amnesty stipulate that those convicted twice or who are unwilling or unable to compensate for the damages caused by their crimes will not be set free.

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