

Russia Accuses Uralkali CEO of Direct Criminal Involvement

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 05, 2013

The  Moscow Times

Uralkali chief executive Vladislav Baumgertner was directly responsible for a crime that has damaged the Russian budget, the Investigative Committee said, leveling charges that could see the central figure of an international potash dispute jailed for 10 years.

The CEO has been languishing under house arrest in Minsk since Aug. 26, accused of causing massive losses to the Belarussian economy by pulling Uralkali out of a lucrative potash sales cartel with Belarus' major producer, Belaruskali, in July.

"Baumgertner is incriminated in the direct organization of a crime and managing accomplices," a source in the Russian Investigative Committee told Interfax. Officially, the CEO is accused by the committee of abuse of power. A warrant for his arrest was issued by a Russian court Oct. 21

The Russian Embassy in Minsk asked authorities in Belarus on Tuesday for a meeting with

Baumgertner. Belarus has refused to extradite the CEO without guarantees that he will face charges in Russia and compensation for the damage caused to Belaruskali and the sales cartel. The Belarussian Investigative Committee has put the damage at \$100 million. President Alexander Lukashenko later gave a figure of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. The size of the Russian authorities' estimate remains unclear.

The request comes on the heels of Belarus' announcement last week that it had extended its investigation into Baumgertner for another two months, allowing the prolongation of his detention.

In mid-October, Russia opened its own criminal investigation into Baumgertner. On Oct. 22, the prosecutor general requested his extradition, Interfax reported Tuesday. Some observers saw the move as a ploy to get the CEO back to Russian soil, where the charges can be dropped.

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