

Polonsky Puts Off Plans to Return to Russia

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The former billionaire was arrested in absentia on charges of large-scale fraud. **Vladimir Filonov**

Fugitive tycoon Sergei Polonsky booked a flight to Moscow for Monday, but has had to postpone his travel arrangements while his offer of a plea bargain with the Russian authorities hangs in the balance.

"I had planned to come to Moscow on the 11th" of November, Polonsky told Rossiya 24 television channel Wednesday. "But given the current situation, I can't," he said without elaborating.

Polonsky's lawyer Alexander Karabanov said the decision not to come to Russia was linked to the criminal case against his client. Russian authorities have charged Polonsky with stealing more than 5.7 billion rubles (\$172 million) from stakeholders in a residential development project. He was arrested in absentia in September in connection with the case.

"He wants to return to Russia very much but he has no such possibility," Karabanov said, Itar-Tass reported Wednesday.

Karabanov said that Polonsky has signed a request to enter into a plea bargain, but that no decision has been made on it yet. "We are waiting for a reply; we really hope it will be favorable," he said.

Polonsky, who is wanted by Interpol, earlier said he was eager to return to Russia, but only if investigators rescind his arrest in absentia and impose travel restrictions on him instead.

For his part in the bargain, Polonsky would cooperate with investigators and pay back the money to the deceived development project investors.

Polonsky faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of large-scale fraud.

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