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Russia, U.S. to 'Investigate Cases' Against Magnitsky Act Targets

By Oleg Sukhov

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The death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky prompted the U.S. to create a list of banned Russian officials.

Russian and U.S. law enforcement agencies plan to jointly investigate embezzlement and money laundering cases against a number of those targeted by the Magnitsky Act, unidentified individuals close to the situation said Friday.

They are accused of stealing funds from the Russian budget and laundering them abroad.

A delegation from the U.S. Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigations will soon arrive in Moscow to hold talks on the issue and several other unspecified criminal cases, the individuals told Interfax.

The Magnitsky Act was passed last year in response to the death of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in a Russian prison in 2009, which prompted an international outcry. The law imposed asset freezes and visa bans on those implicated in the Magnitsky case. In April,

the U.S. Treasury Department published a list of 18 Russians subject to the sanctions.

In December 2012 Russia responded to the U.S. law by passing legislation that introduced sanctions for U.S. citizens accused of rights violations, and enabled authorities to suspend the activities of non-governmental organizations receiving funding from the United States. Adoptions of Russian children by Americans were also banned.

Critics have accused Russia of being reluctant to investigate Magnitsky's death and covering for those implicated in the case. In December 2012 a Russian court acquitted Dmitry Kratov, a doctor accused of causing Magnitsky's death through negligence.

Several independent investigations carried out in recent years concluded that his death was allegedly not due only to negligence but was a "premeditated murder" caused by torture.

Magnitsky was imprisoned on tax evasion charges in 2008 soon after accusing officials of stealing $230 million in state funds in what many interpreted as retribution for his whistleblowing activities. In July 2013 he was convicted of tax evasion during the first posthumous trial in Russian history.

Contact the author at o.sukhov@imedia.ru

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