Belarus Extradites Uralkali CEO to Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Baumgertner, who has been held under house arrest in Minsk, will finally be extradited. **Maxim Stulov**

Belarus has handed over to the Russian authorities the chief executive of potash producer Uralkali, who was arrested in August after the collapse of a sales cartel between the two countries, Belarus' Prosecutor General's Office said Thursday.

The prosecutor said the CEO did not seek to appeal the extradition, RIA Novosti reported.

Before the handover, which remained unconfirmed by Uralkali on Thursday, the Russian prosecutor's office said in a statement that Vladislav Baumgertner would be detained and investigated upon his extradition. He had been charged in Belarus with abuse of power and embezzlement and held under house arrest in Minsk.

The news came days after tycoon Suleiman Kerimov agreed to sell his 21.75 percent stake in Uralkali to billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, easing tensions over the collapse of a potash sales cartel with Belarus that hit global prices.

As conditions for ending a row that had unsettled relations between the two ex-Soviet allies, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko demanded a change of Uralkali ownership and criminal investigation by Russia of Baumgertner.

Uralkali's withdrawal from the alliance with state-run Belaruskali rocked the global potash industry and threatened Belarus, which is heavily dependent on cheap Russian energy and financial aid, with financial losses.

Lukashenko has called for restoration of the cartel, which controlled 40 percent of the $20 billion global market for the soil nutrient. Experts doubt this will be easy to achieve due to industry overcapacity.

Uralkali left the sales alliance, Belarussian Potash Company, in July, after it accused the government in Minsk of allowing the state-owned company to export potash independently. The withdrawal left the sales firm with virtually no qualified staff and raised fears of a price war.

Baumgertner's business partners and some Russian officials found the accusations of abuse of power absurd because the executive was not an official and therefore had no powers to abuse. Uralkali has denied the charges, describing Minsk's actions as blackmail.

Lukashenko earlier threatened to bring charges against Kerimov in Belarus, and said that Baumgertner would be allowed to go only if he paid the damages that he allegedly caused, estimated at $100 million. It was not clear Thursday if Baumgertner would have to pay the damages.

Material from AP and the Moscow Times was used in this report.