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Tycoon Lebedev Starts Community Service Work in Village

By The Moscow Times

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Billionaire Alexander Lebedev, sentenced to 150 hours of community service for battering the now fugitive real estate tycoon Sergei Polonsky on a television show two years ago, began serving his sentence in a village in the Tula region on Tuesday.

"Today he is doing outdoor maintenance at a local kindergarten under the supervision of representatives of the local municipal administration," said Margarita Rimar, press secretary of the Federal Penal Service in the Tver region, located 150 kilometers northwest of Moscow.

Lebedev must work from two to four hours every day, serving a total of 12 hours per week, she said, Interfax reported. The local administration will decide in what capacity Lebedev will be used and what work he will perform.

"It will be unpaid, low-skilled labor that anybody can do," Rimar said.

The businessman has taken unpaid leave from his place of work to complete his punishment, according to the documents he presented upon his arrival and registration. "Lebedev said he intends to serve the sentence in the shortest possible time, working four hours a day with no days off," Rimar recounted.

Community service also mandates a cultural program. On Tuesday, Lebedev will be taken to a potato farm; on Wednesday he will visit a house museum of the writer Ivan Turgenev, followed by a trip to Leo Tolstoy's country manor on Thursday, Lebedev wrote on his twitter feed.

The incident that led to Lebedev's conviction took place on Sept. 18, 2011 during the recording of a political talk show, "NTVshniki," on the NTV network, where both Lebedev and Polonsky were invited as guests. Following a verbal spat with fellow guest Polonsky in the course of a discussion, Lebedev hit his opponent in the face. The moment was later included in the broadcast edition of the show.

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