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More Yukos Criminal Cases Opened, Report Says

By Christopher Brennan

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Mikhail Khordorkovsky in court

Eighteen managers from Yukos, the oil company formerly owned by jailed businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky, have been placed on an international wanted list for connection to a possible third large-scale embezzlement case against the company, a news report said Monday.

The status of Khodorkovsky, the former CEO of the company, has not yet been determined, Itar-Tass reported, citing an unidentified person with knowledge of the case.

The source named former Yukos co-owner Vladimir Dubov, major shareholder Leonid Nevzlin, and one of the company's former presidents, Mikhail Brudno, as three of the high-ranking officials on the international wanted list for laundering 10 billion dollars in illegal assets through a foreign company.

The legalization of money gotten through illegal means carries up to a seven-year prison sentence upon a conviction.

Cases were opened against former financial director Bruce Misamore and ex-CEO Steven Theede, an unidentified law enforcement official told Interfax.

The official, who said investigators have opened criminal cases against four top managers, said that Russian investigators' "foreign colleagues are not going to cooperate in this case, and it is impossible to indict the suspects."

Former Yukos employees such as Dubov and Nevzlin are now living abroad and have been convicted in absentia by Russian courts for alleged crimes connected to their time at the company.

Deputy Prosecutor General Alexander Zvyagintsev told Interfax on Friday that cases against officials including Khodorkovsky are being probed and have "good judicial prospects."

Khodorkovsky's lawyer Vadim Klyuvgant responded to the statements by saying that prosecutors had not notified him or his client about a new case.

Cases against the oil tycoon and his business partner Platon Lebedev, which many people saw as politically motivated retribution for Khodorkovsky's criticism of President Vladimir Putin, were first opened in 2003. The pair were given a sentence of nine years in prison in 2005, which was later increased to 13 years after convictions in a second criminal case in 2010.

The Moscow City Court reduced the sentence to 11 years last December, and Khodorkovsky is currently set to be released in August 2014. Lebedev is scheduled to be released in May.

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