

Cambodia Yet to Rule on Polonsky's Extradition

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Polonsky, left, and his lawyer speaking to the media outside the court in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Monday. **Samrang Pring**

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A Cambodian prosecutor said Monday that no decision has been made regarding Russia's extradition request for fugitive businessman Sergei Polonsky, who is wanted in his homeland on embezzlement charges.

Polonsky's lawyer Alexander Karabanov said earlier Monday that a court had freed his client having found no grounds for handing him over to Russia.

However, the decision to release Polonsky was related to an earlier kidnapping charge that saw the businessman do time in Cambodian prison last year.

Polonsky was jailed after he and two other Russians were accused of locking a group of

Cambodian sailors in the hold of a yacht during a party a year ago.

Polonsky was released after paying compensation to the sailors and media reports published over the weekend said that the case was closed.

But an unidentified Cambodian prosecutor said that the case is still open and that Polonsky has merely been temporarily released on bail, RIA Novosti reported.

The court in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, will not rule on Russia's extradition request until the kidnapping case has been concluded, the prosecutor said.

A spokesman from Russia's Prosecutor General's Office confirmed that no decision on Polonsky's extradition has been made and that the kidnapping charges still stand.

“Cambodian investigators simply decided to change the level of restriction” placed on Polonsky, who has been told not to leave Cambodia, the spokesman said, Interfax reported.

Polonsky is wanted in Russia on suspicion of stealing \$172 million from shareholders in a residential development project in Moscow. Polonsky denies the embezzlement charges.

Cambodian police arrested Polonsky in November on Russia's request, though the operation was not straightforward.

Polonsky had received a tip off about the plans to arrest him and fled his private island. He tried to hide in the jungle, but police caught him after several hours of searching.

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