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France to Extradite Former Moscow Region Finance Minister to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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A French court has decided to extradite the former finance minister of the Moscow region to Russia, a statement published on the Investigative Committee's website said Thursday.

Alexei Kuznetsov has been wanted in Russia since 2008 for fraud, embezzlement and money laundering and faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Investigators believe that the minister and his accomplices embezzled 3.5 billion rubles ($110 million) from the Moscow region's budget , Lenta.ru reported.

Following the initiation of a criminal case Kuznetsov quit his job and together with his wife, emigre socialite Janna Bullock, went to the United States, where he obtained citizenship.

In July 2013 Kuznetsov was detained in France, reportedly while traveling with a fake passport. The Prosecutor General's Office issued a request for his extradition to Russia

the following month.

Critics of the charges against Kuznetsov say that the accusations could be a political tool to beef up the Kremlin's anti-corruption image and deflect attention away from current Moscow region authorities.

Bullock remains on an international wanted list in connection with the investigation.

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