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Cambodia Postpones Polonsky Extradition

By The Moscow Times

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A Cambodian court has upheld Russia's extradition request for fugitive tycoon Sergei Polonsky, but has postponed handing him over due to a criminal case against the businessman that is ongoing in the Asian country, Russian prosecutors said Friday.

Polonsky spent three months in jail last year after a regional Cambodian court charged him with kidnapping in connection to an incident involving a group of local sailors.

The businessman's lawyer, Alexander Karabanov, said Tuesday that the case had been dropped after his client reached an agreement with the sailors and that Polonsky was free to leave Cambodia.

However, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office said in a statement Friday that the regional court has not reached a decision, and that the Cambodian authorities will keep Polonsky in the country in the meantime, Interfax reported.

"Taking into account that Polonsky stands accused of committing a crime in Cambodia against its citizens, his extradition to Russia has been suspended until a court ruling," the statement said.

Polonsky was released from prison on Monday — having been arrested by Cambodian police on Russia's request in November — but was forbidden from leaving the country.

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

A Moscow court arrested him in absentia in July and the Interior Ministry said Monday that it had confiscated $100-million-worth of assets of foreign companies belonging to Polonsky.

Karabanov said that Polonsky is keen to return to Russia to assist investigators with the embezzlement inquiry, but only on condition that an arrest warrant against him is annulled.

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