

Russian CEO Charged With Taking Bribes for Uranium Contracts in U.S.

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Vadim Mikerin

The CEO of a subsidiary of Russia's state nuclear monopoly Rosatom has been charged in the U.S. with soliciting bribes in exchange for uranium contracts in an indictment that has drawn allegations of economic sabotage from Russian pundits.

Tenam CEO Vadim Mikerin is charged with conspiracy to extort nearly \$1.7 million in exchange for awarding three contracts worth a combined \$33 million to U.S. firm Transport Logistics International (TLI), the U.S. Attorney's Office for the state of Maryland said in a statement late last week.

Mikerin, who resides in a Maryland town close to Washington, faces up to 20 years in prison if found guilty. The company that he heads, Tenam, is the U.S. subsidiary of Techsnabexport, or Tenex, a subsidiary of Rosatom.

Mikerin's alleged crimes go back to an agreement inked in 1992, shortly after the Soviet Union's collapse, in which the United States and Russia agreed that U.S. utility providers would buy highly enriched uranium from Russia's disassembled nuclear warheads.

Tenex was charged with transporting the uranium and selling it within the United States. Prosecutors say that Mikerin began conspiring to award uranium contracts to TLI in exchange for bribes as early as 2006.

Three Americans — Daren Condrey and Carol Condrey, heads of TLI, and Boris Rubizhevsky, who served as a consultant to Mikerin — also face up to 20 years imprisonment if found guilty of wire fraud conspiracy.

News of his arrest was met in Russia by accusations of political intrigue: Kremlin-funded news agency RIA Novosti cited two Russian analysts as saying the case was part of a U.S. effort to undermine Russia's position on nuclear energy markets.

U.S.-Russian relations have reached their lowest point in decades over the past year, with the U.S. now sanctioning many of Russia's largest state-owned companies in an effort to force Russia to give up support for separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

A Rosatom spokesman told RIA Novosti that the company considers it possible that the case was politically motivated, citing unidentified documents that purportedly show U.S. "agents" encouraging Mikerin to betray Russia in exchange for his freedom.

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