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Russian Prosecutors Seek Ex-U.S. Ambassador McFaul for Questioning in Browder Case

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Michael McFaul (Valery Sharifulin / TASS)

Russian prosecutors have said that they seek to question U.S. officials, including a former ambassador to Moscow, as part of an ongoing investigation into financial crimes allegedly committed by U.S.-born hedge fund manager William Browder.

Russia branded Browder a national security threat and banned him from the country in 2005, when his Hermitage Capital fund held more than $4 billion in investments. In 2013, Browder was convicted in absentia of tax evasion and sentenced to nine years in prison.

Related article: Interpol Rejects Russia's Request to Arrest Fund Manager Browder

On Tuesday, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office said it seeks to question 11 U.S. intelligence

officers, businessmen and diplomats, including former U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul.

“It was under his 2009-2010 leadership in Russia that the State Department memos from Moscow were compiled on the progress of the investigation in the Magnitsky case,” the Prosecutors General’s spokesman Alexander Kurennoy was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

Browder’s lawyer Magnitsky died in Russian pretrial detention in 2009 in suspicious circumstances, a year after being arrested on suspicion of unpaid taxes. Browder has since campaigned in the U.S. and other Western countries to pass legislation intended to punish Russian officials linked to human rights abuses.

“We’re ready to send another request to the competent U.S. authorities to allow us to interrogate these U.S. special services employees, a number of other U.S. civil servants and entrepreneurs in order to subsequently indict them for the crimes committed by Browder,” TASS cited the prosecutor’s office spokesman as saying.

McFaul pointed out in a tweet on Tuesday that he had served in the Obama White House in 2009-2010 and that his term as U.S. ambassador in Moscow only began in 2012.

“Even during the Stalin era, the Soviet government never had the audacity to try to arrest U.S. government officials,” the former envoy tweeted Wednesday.

Earlier this week, President Vladimir Putin offered for U.S. prosecutors to visit Russia to sit it on an interrogation of 12 Russian agents who were indicted in the U.S. last week of election hacking. He asked U.S. President Donald Trump in return to allow Russian prosecutors to be present at an interrogation of individuals "suspected of illegal transactions" in the Browder case.

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