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5 Years on, France Extradites Ex-Moscow Official Charged With Embezzling $200M

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Mikhail Pochuev / TASS

France has extradited a former finance minister of the Moscow region suspected of embezzling $200 million, five years after Russian prosecutors had put in an extradition request.

Alexei Kuznetsov was put on an international wanted list after he left Russia in 2008 for charges of fraud, embezzlement and money laundering. Prosecutors believe the former minister, who faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted, embezzled 14 billion rubles ($202.7 million) with his accomplices.

In a statement on Thursday, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office said that Kuznetsov had been extradited to Russia.

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French authorities detained Kuznetsov in July 2013, reportedly while he traveled with a fake passport. A court ruled to extradite him to Russia in 2014.

On Thursday, Russian prosecutors said that the French prime minister had issued an order to extradite Kuznetsov in November 2017. The former Moscow region finance minister's appeal to stay the order was rejected last Friday, Dec. 28.

Kuznetsov, his former deputy and two businessmen were charged with stealing money from the region's utilities companies, sending them fake bills and pocketing the payments.

A court in Moscow sentenced Kuznetsov's wife, Belarussian-born New York real-estate developer and socialite Janna Bullock, to 11 years in absentia last year for embezzling nearly $200 million. Russia and the United States do not have an extradition treaty.

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