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Russian 'Whale Jail' Company Slapped With $900K Fine Over Orca Captures

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS

A court in Russia's Far East has fined a company nearly $900,000 for its role in the so-called "whale prison" that has garnered international outrage in recent months.

Nearly 100 whales reportedly bound for export to China have been held for months in cramped pens near the Sea of Japan port of Nakhodka, triggering a wave of criticism. Russian officials in April signed an agreement with a group of international scientists to release the orcas and belugas.

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The Oceanarium DV company has been ordered to pay 56 million rubles ($869,000) for violating fishing laws in its capture of three orcas, Interfax reported Friday.

The Frunzensky District Court in Vladivostok has also fined the "White Whale" company 30

million rubles ($466,000) for violating fishing laws during its capture of the orcas and beluga whales.

The other two companies involved in the whales' capture are set to be sentenced by the same court, Interfax reported.

Oceanarium DV, which didn't plead guilty during the court hearing, will be able to appeal the ruling.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) has also brought charges against the companies for breaking fishing laws.

While the companies have been ordered to release the whales, activists have said that the whales are not yet being rehabilitated for release into the wild and have spotted school excursions to the whales' enclosures.

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