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Interpol Rejects Russia's Request for International Arrest Warrant Against Billionaire Bank Founder

Russia is seeking to extradite Otkritie co-founder Boris Mints, who fled to London in 2018, on embezzlement charges.

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Boris Mints **Alexei Nikolsky / Russian Presidential Press and Information Office / TASS**

Interpol has rejected Russia's application to issue an international arrest warrant for billionaire banker Boris Mints and two of his sons, currently exiled in London, Mints' representatives told The Moscow Times.

Russian authorities are seeking the Otkritie Bank co-founder on charges of embezzling 34 billion rubles ($460 million) from the bank shortly before it almost collapsed in 2017, when it received a multi-billion dollar bailout from the Central Bank. Before being taken over by the regulator, Otkritie was Russia's largest privately-owned financial institution.

After conducting a months-long review of Russia's request, first submitted in January 2020, the Commission for the Control of Interpol's Files dismissed the application to issue an international arrest warrant for Mints and two of his sons, Dmitry and Alexander, citing insufficient documentation linking them to the charges laid down in Russia, a spokesperson for the family said in a statement.

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The Interpol investigation found the Russian authorities failed to provide "necessary detail as to what the individuals were said to have done, how they were alleged to have benefited or why they might be found criminally liable if tried in Russia," the family's lawyers added.

Interpol documents seen by The Moscow Times confirm that none of the trio are subject to a so-called Notice or Diffusion — Interpol's system that allows law enforcement agencies to request international assistance, such as arresting wanted figures in different jurisdictions.

The family welcomed the decision in a statement Thursday. A spokesperson said Russia's attempts to force the Mints' extradition back to Russia was "another attempt to cause harm and damage to our family financially, reputationally and personally, as part of a wider campaign by our opponents in Russia to intimidate, pressure and/or deter us and potential witnesses."

"The Commission's decision further illustrates that the charges brought against us in Russia are unfounded and without any merit."

Russia's Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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The embezzlement charges relate to deals struck just before the near-downfall of Otkritie, which Mints co-founded and in which he was a minority shareholder. Russia's Investigative Committee claims the Mints, along with Otrikitie's then-chief executive and its largest shareholder, conspired to sell millions of dollars worth of bonds at inflated prices and on ultra-generous terms from Mints' O1 investment group to Otkritie in order to write-off outstanding debts before Russia's Central Bank took over the lender — an illegal transaction which cost the bank 34 billion rubles ($460 million), Russia alleges.

Boris Mints has lived in London since 2018 after fleeing Russia following Otkritie's bailout. Forbes estimated his' net worth at $1.3 billion in 2017 before he dropped off its ranking of billionaires in 2018.

In 2019, London's High Court in London blocked $572 million worth of Mints' assets at the request of Russia's Central Bank, which was seeking to recover the funds poured into rescue the bank at the height of the crisis.

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