

Montenegro Holds Azerbaijan-Born Tycoon Wanted by Russia

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Telman Ismailov. **ITAR / TASS**

An Azerbaijan-born Russian billionaire wanted by Moscow over his alleged role in two murders has been arrested in Montenegro, media reports and his lawyer said on Saturday.

Telman Ismailov was arrested in Podgorica late on Friday on an international arrest warrant issued by Russia, local media reported.

His lawyer, Milos Vuksanovic, said a Podgorica tribunal ordered that Ismailov be remanded in custody pending extradition.

He said Ismailov had been the "victim of political persecution by Russia" and that prior to his arrest he had been seeking asylum in Montenegro where his son Alekper Ismailov owns a casino in the coastal town of Budva.

Local media reports said Russia suspects Ismailov of financing the murder of two entrepreneurs in Moscow in 2016 to the tune of \$2 million.

Ismailov has in the past sparked the ire of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The tycoon Ismailov built a vast shopping centre in Moscow that was criticised for failing to adhere to sanitation standards and for the presence of counterfeit goods.

When he later inaugurated a luxury hotel in Turkey with great fanfare in May 2009, he again drew the wrath of Putin, who unleashed a tirade against counterfeiting.

The Moscow market was shut down several months later and Ismailov left Russia.

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