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Russian Basketball Player Arrested in France at Request of United States

By AFP

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Daniil Kasatkin. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

French law enforcement authorities arrested a Russian professional basketball player at the request of the United States, where he is wanted for allegedly taking part in a ransomware hacking ring, a Paris court heard Wednesday.

Daniil Kasatkin, 26, who played college basketball at Penn State University and most recently for Moscow's MBA-MAI, was arrested at Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport on June 21, officials said.

Authorities in the United States accuse him of negotiating payoffs for a group that hacked the computer systems of around 900 companies and two federal government entities in the U.S. between 2020 and 2022, demanding money to end their attacks.

Kasatkin, 26, denies the accusations.

"He bought a used computer. He did absolutely nothing wrong. He's shocked," his lawyer, Frederic Belot, told AFP.

"He's useless with computers. He can't even install an app. He didn't touch anything on this computer. It was either hacked, or sold to him by a hacker who wanted to pass himself off as someone else," Belot added.

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The court denied bail for Kasatkin, who faces potential extradition to the United States.

Belot said Kasatkin had recently become engaged and traveled to France with his fiancée. He added that the athlete's physical condition was deteriorating in custody, threatening his basketball career.

Kasatkin played four seasons with MBA-MAI, helping the team place third twice in the Russian Basketball Cup. He appeared briefly as a guard for Penn State during the 2018–2019 season.

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