

UK Businessman Fears Danger From Russia after 'Police Leak'

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Ivan Cherkasov

A senior executive from Hermitage Capital fears his life may be in danger after his home address in London was leaked to officials involved in the pretrial detention death of Hermitage lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.

Newly released court documents suggest Soca, Britain's Serious Organized Crime Agency, passed the information to the Russian Interior Ministry, which forwarded it to an official accused of blocking Magnitsky's lawyers from visiting their client before his death, Britain's Guardian newspaper reported Saturday.

The official is on the list of 60 people who would be banned from entering the United States under proposed legislation to punish those involved in the 37-year-old lawyer's death.

Magnitsky died in a detention center in 2009 after being refused medical treatment. He had been jailed on charges of tax evasion after accusing Russian officials of a \$230 million tax fraud.

The executive whose address was revealed, Ivan Cherkasov, has been the subject of death threats traced back to Russia, and he is also facing criminal accusations and an arrest warrant from an Interior Ministry official implicated in the tax fraud. Cherkasov says he and his family are now in danger of retaliation.

Senior Hermitage staff say that they have received numerous death threats since Magnitsky's death, and Scotland Yard's counter-terrorism unit has offered protection against potential Russian hit men.

The organized crime agency also warned Interpol that extradition requests by Russia against Hermitage staff should be refused, citing concerns about the Magnitsky case.

The news comes as London is on edge after the attempted murder of wealthy Russian banker German Gorbuntsov and reports of an assassination plot against London-based Chechen rebel envoy Akhmed Zakayev.

The U.S. Senate is likely to begin consideration this spring of a bill named in honor of Magnitsky that would require the United States to deny visas and freeze the assets of people with links to the lawyer's detention and death, and last month British lawmakers passed a binding resolution calling on Britain to take similar measures.

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