

Official Implicated in Magnitsky Case Charged With Embezzlement

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Correction appended.

A former Russian tax official implicated in a tax fraud scheme uncovered by the late Sergei Magnitsky has been charged with embezzling 4.4 billion rubles (\$132 million) in state funds, a news report said Friday.

According to investigators, Olga Tsymai, a former employee of Moscow's tax inspectorate No. 28, verified falsified tax return documents as part of a criminal group formed in 2009 and helped the group to obtain money for the returns, Kommersant reported, citing official files on the case.

Tsymai's name appears on a list drafted by U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin of 60 Russians suspected of being involved in a \$230 million tax fraud uncovered by Magnitsky, a lawyer for investment fund Hermitage Capital, or in Magnitsky's death in prison in 2009.

Last year, U.S. President Barack Obama signed into law a measure named after Magnitsky that requires the White House to publish a list of Russians suspected of human rights violations, including individuals implicated in the fraud Magnitsky uncovered or in his death. People on the list are subject to visa bans and asset freezes in the U.S.

Tsymai is not among the 18 people on the U.S. list published in April, although the government can choose not to make public certain names on it.

According to the Russian investigation into Tsymai, she is suspected of being part of a criminal group that registered nine fake firms and drew up counterfeit documents used for requesting tax returns, Kommersant said.

As head of the auditing department at tax inspectorate No. 28, Tsymai made sure the documents did not raise questions during checks, and the companies were subsequently approved for receiving VAT tax returns, investigators said.

The money was transferred by the Moscow branch of the Federal Treasury to the companies' bank accounts from October 2009 to May 2010. The funds were then withdrawn by the companies or transferred abroad.

After the alleged theft, Tsymai supposedly enjoyed the protection of then-Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov while working at a Defense Ministry agency.

The Investigative Committee said Tsymai had twice been charged with large-scale fraud but was never arrested because she had signed a pledge not to skip town, the Kommersant report said.

Tsymai's former boss at tax inspectorate No. 28, Olga Stepanova, is also being investigated for participating in a similar tax fraud scheme involving the embezzlement of 5.4 billion rubles. Stepanova was one of the officials Magnitsky accused of being involved in the \$230 million theft, and her name is one of the 18 on the official U.S. Magnitsky list.

Correction: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that Olga Tsymai's name was included on the official U.S. Magnitsky list of Russians subject to visa bans and asset freezes, instead of only on the unofficial list authored by U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin of people implicated in a tax fraud uncovered by Sergei Magnitsky. Also, an earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that Olga Stepanova is the current head of tax inspectorate No. 28, instead of the former head.

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