

Belarus Extends Baumgertner Investigation by 2 Months

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Belarussian authorities have extended a criminal investigation into the chief executive of Russian potash giant Uralkali by another two months, a spokesman for Belarus' Investigative Committee said Monday.

Vladislav Baumgertner, who was detained in late August during a visit to Belarus, will remain under house arrest in Minsk while the investigation continues, spokesman Pavel Traulko said.

The businessman was originally arrested on suspicion of abuse of authority, but Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko later said the charges would be changed to embezzlement.

Under Belarussian law, investigators have two months to complete an inquiry, though as in the case of Baumgertner, whose first two-month period under investigation ended Saturday, the deadline can be extended.

The Russian CEO was arrested about a month after Uralkali unexpectedly withdrew from a cooperation agreement with its Belarussian fertilizer production counterpart Belaruskali, causing a steep drop in potash prices and sparking a political row between the countries. Uralkali claims the charges against Baumgertner are politically motivated.

Russia opened its own criminal investigation into the CEO for abuse of power in mid-October and demanded his extradition — a step observers say is a way of returning him to Russia before dropping the charges against him.

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