

Wildberries Subsidiary Files \$400M Claim Against Bakalchuk

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Wildberries founder Tatiana Kim. **Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency**

VB Development, a development and construction subsidiary of Russia's largest e-commerce operator Wildberries, has filed a 37-billion-ruble (\$400 million) lawsuit against its main beneficiary Vladislav Bakalchuk in the Moscow region arbitration court, the Vedomosti business daily [reported](#).

As [followed in detail by bne IntelliNews](#), Wildberries has been rocked by the controversy surrounding its merger deal with Russ Group, an outdoor advertising operator that is one-tenth the size of Wildberries. The company's founder and CEO Tatiana Kim (ex-Bakalchuk) is [divorcing her husband](#) Vladislav Bakalchuk, who has turned to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov for help.

In a violent development of the ongoing divorce proceedings, two people were [killed in a shootout last month as Vladislav tried to storm the offices](#) of the country's largest e-retailer.

VB Development, which constructs Wildberries' warehouses, is 100% owned by Bakalchuk but

remains a business unit of the parent company.

The lawsuit was brought against Bakalchuk personally in connection with the losses incurred by VB Development, a source familiar with the contents of the court filing told Vedomosti.

Kim previously claimed that Bakalchuk and his team siphoned 37 billion rubles out of the company, froze all construction projects and jeopardized the entire business.

The claim likely stems from the fact that Bakalchuk allegedly allowed the advance payment for the construction of warehouses to be transferred to companies under his control and therefore committed embezzlement, lawyers surveyed by Vedomosti suggested.

Since day one, the e-commerce major has been managed by its [founder and Russia's richest woman](#), Tatiana Kim, who holds 99% of the company, and her husband, Vladislav Bakalchuk, who only owns 1%. But Bakalchuk claims that as there was no prenuptial agreement or marriage contract between the pair, all of the assets should actually be split 50:50, as per Russian divorce law.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports claim that Dagestan senator and controversial billionaire Suleiman Kerimov is behind the merger of Russ and Wildberries, with two main interpretations of the merger emerging. According to one of them, "Tatiana fell in love, and her love has something to do with Russ," unnamed sources close to Bakalchuk told Forbes.

Other sources claim that Kim has been coming under heavy administrative and possibly even criminal prosecution pressure after a recent fire incident at the Wildberries sorting hub in St. Petersburg, which was reportedly [rushed](#) into operation without the necessary regulatory approvals.

Reportedly, to deal with the matter at the highest level she could have turned to Kerimov, a Kremlin insider, and Russ Group in exchange for a share in Wildberries.

In a recent [opinion piece](#), bne IntelliNews speculated that the deal could also be part of a move by President Vladimir Putin to increase the Kremlin's influence over Wildberries, Russia's answer to Amazon, as part of a broader move to enhance its control over Russia's answers to Facebook ([VK](#)) and Google ([Yandex](#)).

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