

ADEPI Foundation Seeks UK Protection for Russian Corruption Case Witness

NICE, FRANCE, October 29, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The British Home Office has been asked what protection is being provided for a UK-based Russian who is due to give evidence in a high-profile corruption case against Dmitry Zakharchenko, former deputy head of Moscow's Ministry of Internal Affairs' Committee for Economic Security and Combating Corruption.



I wonder if there is any mechanism that allows him to be protected at least for the visit to swear the affidavit."

Denis MacShane

German Gorbuntsov, a Russian citizen residing in the UK, is expected to give evidence in the trial but has expressed fears for his personal safety and has requested protection.

The ADEPI Foundation, headquartered in Nice, France, has issued a statement in support of the request. The ADEPI foundation supports people in crisis situations linked with their professional activity, particularly those who find

themselves under pressure or in danger. The foundation assists with lawyers and media to draw attention to such situations and seek support.

Mr. Gorbuntsov's situation has been compared with that of Russian whistleblower Alexander Perepilichny, who died mysteriously near his Surrey home while reportedly helping a Swiss investigation into Russian money laundering. Others compare him with Sergei Skripal, the former double agent whose spying on the Russian security services is thought to have led to the attempt on his and his daughter's lives earlier this year. Gorbuntsov, once an insider within President Vladimir Putin's circle, is regarded by some to be a potentially valuable source for UK authorities.

Zakharchenko was scheduled to appear in court on Tuesday (Oct. 30) on suspicion of abuse of power, obstruction of justice and accepting bribes. He was initially arrested in 2016. Since then a widening investigation by Russian authorities has led to the forfeiture of assets worth about \$136 million including 27 properties in elite neighborhoods of Moscow, four luxury vehicles, a further 8 billion rubles in cash and a gold bar.

Mr. Gorbuntsov's case has been taken up by Denis MacShane, who served as a minister with responsibility for Russian affairs in Tony Blair's government. He has written to Ben Wallace, the UK Minister of State for State Security, asking him to accede to Mr. Gorbuntsov's plea.

"Let me stress I do not know and have never met with Mr. Gorbuntsov. However, he is well known to the Home Office and Metropolitan Police as he was a victim of a failed assassination attempt in March 2012 in London."

Mr. Gorbuntsov used to own several banks in Russia and Moldova but has lived in the UK for several years. In March 2012, he was shot by a submachine gun as he entered his London home. He remained under 24-hour armed security watch for a period of time after the attempted murder.

Mr. MacShane writes, "I wonder if there is any mechanism that allows him to be protected at least for the visit to swear the affidavit. I know all relations with Russia and involving Russians

are tricky and I admire the strong approach you have taken."

The ADEPI Foundation said the authorities need to pay closer attention to the protection of witnesses in such cases. "In Mr. Gorbuntsov's case, we believe he has been in a position, as a former member of the Kremlin's inner circle, to supply important information to UK authorities and could still do so. It was a miracle that Mr. Gorbuntsov survived the previous attack and he fears for his safety."

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