

## **US Lawyer Receives Three Years in Prison**

On 11 August American lawyer Emanuel Zeltser was sentenced to three years in a low-security correctional institution by the Minsk City Court.

Zeltser was found guilty of attempted industrial espionage and the use of "knowingly false official documents" and was sentenced to 38 months altogether for both charges. His secretary Vladlena Funk, was also found guilty of the same offences, and sentenced to one year in a low-security correctional institution by the Belarusian court. Closed-door trial of Zeltser and Funk began on July 30. Neither relatives, nor diplomats were allowed to attend the hearings. Zeltser and Funk have been held in custody since March, when they were arrested upon their arrival to Minsk on March 12.

According to Mark Zeltser, brother of Emanuel, Boris Berezovsky visited Minsk to testify at the trial. He claims that it was Mr. Berezovsky who arranged the arrest of Emanuel Zeltser over the assets of the late Georgian billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili. When Patarkatsishvili died, his assets became the subject of a dispute between the widow backed by Berezovsky, against his step cousin, Joseph Kay, represented by Zeltser, a New York-based specialist in Russian law and organized crime.

The US embassy is deeply concerned about the health and custody of Mr. Zeltser who is an American citizen. The US charge d'affaires, Jonathan Moore said that the US embassy was not able to follow his medical condition. Zeltser's lawyer fears that because of the fragile health of Mr. Zeltser, the sentence can be lethal to him.

On May 14, the Tbilisi City Court in Georgia recognized Joseph Kay as a legitimate executor of late Mr. Patarkatsishvili's assets.

Source: Belapan

## **Russia calls Belarus to act on Georgia**

Russia's ambassador to Belarus Alekandr Surikov on Tuesday, August 12, criticized Belarusian government for its failure to condemn Georgia over fighting in South Ossetia and offered support to Russia in its conflict with Georgia.

"We do not understand why the Belarusian authorities keep humble silence on the situation in South Ossetia. There's a treaty on the establishment of the Union State. Citizens of the Russian Federation who have found themselves in trouble in South Ossetia, they are, formally speaking, citizens of Belarus as well," he told the reporters. Surikov complained that Belarus had not even offered to send aid for people injured or made homeless in South Ossetia. "We have always supported and defended Belarus," he said.

The first reaction on the Russian-Georgian conflict from Belarus Foreign Ministry was for both sides to cease fire and start negotiations.

On Wednesday, August 13, a statement by the president's press service read that "the Belarusian people, like all Russians, are in mourning over the victims of the tragedy and shares the concerns of those who lost relatives, their homes and their livelihoods. May they have strength and courage in overcoming the consequences of this humanitarian catastrophe".

At the same time David Kotariya, Georgia's deputy ambassador to Belarus said, "We are developing our relations, their economic, cultural, humanitarian aspects." "Georgia and Belarus have already drafted up to 15 bilateral agreements which are to be signed in the upcoming future."

Sources: BelaPan, Reuters