

Hughes Hubbard & Reed

Firm Secures Pro Bono Victory for Russian Activist

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March 18, 2022 – In a recent victory for pro bono client Ilya Zaslavskiy, Russia’s largest commercial bank voluntarily dismissed a lawsuit seeking information related to a 2016 cyber-hack that allegedly created a false link between the bank and the Trump Organization ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

As part of its lawsuit, Alfa Bank served Zaslavskiy, a Russian-born researcher and vocal critic of the current Russian government, with a deposition subpoena in Washington, D.C. Superior Court in Nov. 2021. Alfa Bank’s dismissal of the suit earlier this month rendered moot the subpoena served on Zaslavskiy.

Alfa Bank filed the lawsuit in June 2020 in state court in Palm Beach County, Fla., but it did not identify any of the alleged “cyberattacker” defendants. Instead, Alfa Bank used the suit to issue dozens of subpoenas of individuals who have criticized the Russian government and the powerful oligarchs that control Alfa Bank.

After Alfa Bank served the deposition subpoena on Zaslavskiy, Hughes Hubbard filed a motion on Dec. 8, 2021, to quash the subpoena. The motion argued that Alfa Bank was improperly using the subpoena not to obtain information for its lawsuit, but to harass Zaslavskiy for his research on the corruption of Russian oligarchs and their connections to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Alfa Bank issued the subpoena shortly after Zaslavskiy published several reports related to why certain Russian oligarchs, including those at Alfa Bank, should be sanctioned for their close personal ties to Putin.

On Jan. 27, Alfa Bank filed a motion to set a hearing to resolve Zaslavskiy’s motion to quash in front of Judge Heidi M. Pasichow. (Judge Pasichow had previously denied a motion to quash Alfa Bank’s deposition subpoena of a computer analyst who investigated data related to the allegations in Alfa Bank’s underlying Fla. case.) When Alfa Bank dismissed the case on March 8, Judge Pasichow had not yet ruled on Zaslavskiy’s motion to quash.

As reported in the [National Law Journal](#), the “move to drop the suit comes as major law firms face growing pressure to dump clients with ties to the Kremlin amid Russia’s ongoing war in Ukraine and the raft of sanctions Western governments have imposed on Moscow in response.” The U.S. and EU have both sanctioned Alfa Bank, as well as the individual owners of Alfa Bank, for their ties to President Putin. Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, which represented Alfa Ban in its Fla. Lawsuit and the D.C. court proceeding, has not commented on the dismissal.

Dan Weiner, Benjamin Britz and Hilary McDonnell represented Zaslavskiy.

Related People



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