

Greece backs extradition of Russian to US over bitcoin fraud

October 4 2017, by Costas Kantouris



A Russian man identified as Alexander Vinnik, left, is escorted by police officers as he arrives to the courthouse at the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki on Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. The Greek court will announce Wednesday about the extradition of the Russian cybercrime suspect Vinnik, who is wanted in the United States in a \$4 billion bitcoin fraud case. (AP Photo/Giannis Papanikos)

A Greek court ruled Wednesday to extradite Russian cybercrime suspect Alexander Vinnik to the United States, where he is wanted in connection

with a \$4 billion bitcoin fraud case.

The three-member panel of judges backed the U.S. extradition request for the 37-year-old, who was arrested while on vacation in northern Greece on July 25. Soon after the decision, Vinnik's lawyers appealed to the Supreme Court on behalf of their client.

Russia is also seeking Vinnik's extradition on separate fraud charges, but no date has yet been set for that hearing.

While fighting his extradition to the U.S., Vinnik's lawyers said he would not contest the Russian request.

"We have not seen the formal decision and we'll wait for it to come out before making comment," Vinnik's lawyer Alexandros Lykourezos said.

"We have taken immediate action and appealed the ruling and the case will be examined by the criminal division of the Supreme Court."

U.S. authorities accuse Vinnik of running digital currency exchange BTC-e and of involvement in laundering money from criminal proceeds, charges he denies.

Speaking during Wednesday's hearing, Vinnik repeated that he had nothing to do with the digital platform he is accused of running to commit the bitcoin fraud. He said he was merely a technician and the platform was one of his clients.



A Russian man identified as Alexander Vinnik, left, is escorted by a police officer as he arrives to the courthouse at the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki on Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017. The Greek court is to decide Wednesday about the extradition of the Russian cybercrime suspect Vinnik, who is wanted in the United States in a \$4 billion bitcoin fraud case. (AP Photo/Giannis Papanikos)

"I have nothing to do with what I am accused of," he told the judges.

Vinnik said electronic equipment confiscated during his arrest was not related to his job, and that the laptop seized by police contained only cartoons for his children.



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