MAN LINKED TO JPMORGAN HACKING IN TALKS TO RESOLVE U.S. CASE: FILING

News / Finance

A Florida man accused of running an unlicensed bitcoin exchange and who is among five defendants linked to last summer's massive data breach at JPMorgan Chase & Co is in talks to resolve his criminal case, according to court papers filed Friday.

In a court filing in federal court in Manhattan, a prosecutor said Yuri Lebedev, one of two men charged with operating the bitcoin exchange service, was in discussions "regarding a possible disposition of this case."

The filing used language that is usually indicative of plea talks, though cases in some instances can be resolved with deferred prosecution agreements or with charges being dropped.

Eun Young Choi, a prosecutor under Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara who made the submission, said negotiations were not yet complete and sought an extension until Sept. 28 for when a grand jury would need to indict Lebedev.

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A federal magistrate judge has granted that request, according to court papers.

A spokesman for Bharara declined comment. Mark Bernett, Lebedev's lawyer, did not respond to requests for comment.

Should a plea deal be reached, it could be a breakthrough for authorities investigating the hacking of JPMorgan, which compromised information in 83 million household and small business accounts.

U.S. and Israeli authorities arrested four people in Israel and Florida in July in connection with two separate fraud schemes.

While the cases appeared distinct and made no mention of the JPMorgan hacking, a person familiar with the matter said both actions stemmed from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's investigation of the cyberattack.

In one indictment, U.S. authorities accused Lebedev and another Florida man, Anthony Murgio, of operating an underground bitcoin exchange, called Coin.mx, that was used to facilitate criminal activity including cyberattacks.

In another indictment, authorities accused three men of engaging in a stock manipulation scheme involving U.S. penny stocks.

In that case, Gery Shalon and Ziv Orenstein, both Israeli nationals, were arrested, and the U.S. government has sought their extradition.

Joshua Samuel Aaron, a U.S. citizen who resides in Moscow and Tel Aviv, remains at large, authorities have said.

The case is U.S. v. Lebedev, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, No. 15-mj-02501.

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