

Evidence that William Browder pulled off the tax refund scam **By Lucy Komisar**

The tax refund fraud was a scam that some crooked Russian and Western entrepreneurs had been operating for a few years. There were some “professionals” who specialized in it.

One of them, Moscow lawyer Andrey Pavlov, told me, in several hours-long interviews in New York, that he was approached by Viktor Markelov, a convicted felon, who proposed to hire him. Markelov wanted him to obtain a court order based on an invented liability for the Hermitage companies, which would then lead to a claim for a tax refund. (“You didn’t comply with a contract, we lost money, you owe us \$1 billion,” which was Hermitage’s entire 2006 profits.)



Andrey Pavlov, photo by Lucy Komisar, Feb 2017.

Pavlov said the refund application would require detailed information from the companies’ books for the year, which he said pointed to inside involvement. Browder’s shells didn’t defend the cases and paid out \$230 million, their taxes on the entire 2006 profits.

Markelov went to prison for managing the tax refund fraud. At his interrogation, [Markelov](#) talked about the role of Pavlov and also recalled getting documents from a man he knew only as *Sergei Leonidovich*, as in *Sergei Leonidovich Magnitsky*, who was the agent of the unnamed client.