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Former banker Falcon charged over 1MDB scandal in Singapore



Swiss national Jens Fred Sturzenegger has been charged in relation to the Singapore probe of the 1 Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, becoming the fifth person to be prosecuted here.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) shut down Falcon Private Bank last October and Sturzenegger was arrested by the Commercial Affairs Department on Oct 5 last year.

The bank, **which is also under investigation at home**, was the second Swiss lender whose Singaporean unit was ordered to cease operations last year after BSI Bank Ltd. The action came as the city-state tried to repair the reputation of its financial centre which played host to some 1MDB-related activity. The affair triggered a political crisis in Malaysia and **embroiled Najib Razak, the prime minister**, who has denied any wrongdoing.

Among the 16 charges, **one stated that Sturzenegger allegedly connived in the bank's failure to report the suspicious transaction involving inflow of about US\$1.265 billion** into two Falcon bank accounts in March 2013.

In Switzerland, Falcon said Sturzenegger is a former employee of the bank and declined to comment.

Falcon Bank had been operating as a merchant bank in Singapore since August 2008, offering private banking services. The bank was originally owned by American International Group (AIG) and known as AIG Private Bank. In 2009, AIG Private Bank was acquired by Aabar Investments PJS and renamed Falcon Bank.

The case is the latest in a series mounted by Singapore **over the 1MDB scandal**, which has also spawned probes in the US, Switzerland and other countries where stolen money allegedly flowed.

Falcon's Sturzenegger intends to plead guilty at a hearing on January 11, his lawyer Tan Hee Joek from Tan See Swan & Co told the court. It was not immediately clear on which charges he would plead guilty.