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FSB Reopens Starovoitova Murder Inquiry

By Alexandra Odynova

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Starovoitova speaking during an interview with The Moscow Times in 1992. **Mikhail Metzel**

The Federal Security Service said Monday that it has reopened an investigation into the 1998 murder of State Duma Deputy Galina Starovoitova after new evidence surfaced, offering new hope that justice might finally be served in the high-profile case.

The investigation, which was suspended in April 2008, was reopened on Aug. 25 because the FSB received new evidence, said a spokeswoman for the FSB's branch in St. Petersburg.

The spokeswoman refused to elaborate.

Starovoitova, 52, was shot dead near the door of her St. Petersburg apartment on Nov. 20, 1998.

Her assistant, Ruslan Linkov, who was injured in the attack, linked the decision to reopen the investigation to an appeal that he and Starovoitova's sister, Olga, sent to President Dmitry

Medvedev in July.

The appeal followed the June arrest of former Duma Deputy Mikhail Glushchenko in St. Petersburg on suspicion of organizing the killing of three Russian citizens in Cyprus. Glushchenko's name had surfaced in the Starovoitova case earlier, with a witness testifying in court in 2004 that he had helped organize the killing of the influential liberal lawmaker.

Earlier in 2004, Linkov, Starovoitova's assistant, identified Glushchenko as the possible mastermind.

Glushchenko worked with Starovoitova, a member of the Democratic Russia party, in the Duma, but he denies ever meeting her outside the chamber, his lawyer Yury Khabarov said Monday.

Khabarov also suggested that the new FSB evidence had nothing to do with his client, saying the FSB had previously interviewed him as a witness — not a suspect — in the case. "The FSB took no other interest in him," Khabarov said, Interfax reported.

The new FSB evidence might not be so new, said Andrei Soldatov, who tracks the security services with the Agentura think tank.

"They clearly have something in the case if they resumed the investigation," he said. "The more important question is how long they have known it."

Glushchenko served in the Duma with the Liberal Democratic Party from 1995 to 1999. He is suspected of organizing the murder of businessman Yury Zorin, translator Viktoria Tretyakova and fellow former LDPR Deputy Vyacheslav Shevchenko at a Cyprus villa in March 2004, the Investigative Committee said.

Six suspects were arrested in St. Petersburg in connection with Starovoitova's murder in the fall of 2002. Four of them, including organizer Yury Kolchin and triggerman Vitaly Akishin, were later convicted, while the other two were freed. Several other suspects have been put on a wanted list, while the names of those who ordered the killing have never been made public.

The FSB spokeswoman said the hunt for the suspects had continued even though the investigation had been suspended.

Linkov said Monday that he hoped that the renewed inquiry would result in convictions. "The investigating team has been formed once again, and it has been joined by investigators who previously took part in the inquiry of this crime and know the case thoroughly," he said on his LiveJournal blog. "Now we will wait for the outcome. I hope to see the middlemen and masterminds of this terrorist attack in court soon."

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