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Graft Case Reopened Into Luzhkov's Deputy

By Alexander Bratersky

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin meeting on Saturday with Mayor Yury Luzhkov, right. No mention was made of Ryabinin during the meeting. **Alexei Druzhinin**

The Investigative Committee has reopened a corruption investigation into a powerful deputy of Mayor Yury Luzhkov after the city prosecutor's office closed it for lack of evidence in March.

A City Hall spokesman said Luzhkov stood behind his deputy, Alexander Ryabinin, but complained that the renewed case "showed there was pressure to find a conviction," Interfax reported.

He did not elaborate.

Ryabinin is accused of bribery for purportedly promising in December to sign off on several construction permits in exchange for a 200-square-meter retail space on Ulitsa Bakhrushina

in central Moscow, the Investigative Committee said Friday.

"The ownership rights to the premises were registered to Ryabinin's daughter," the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

The Investigative Committee had accused Ryabinin of abuse of office in March, and the new bribery allegation carries a more serious sentence of up to 12 years in prison if Ryabinin is found guilty.

The accusation against Ryabinin, who remains free, is based on a complaint from Sergei Glyadelkin, head of the construction company Avenue Management, which is co-owned by Austrian-based Avenue Osteuropa Gmbh, Kommersant reported Friday.

Glyadelkin, who is married to Russian actress and former Playboy model Yevgenia Kryukova, worked in the late 1990s and early 2000s as the head of a City Hall-owned company that supervised construction projects in Moscow.

Glyadelkin came under fire in 2005 when a construction company that he controlled, MSM-1, fell two years behind schedule on the elite Severny Park residential complex, prompting protests from homebuyers, some of whom chained themselves to police barriers outside the State Duma building.

Glyadelkin was unavailable for comment Sunday.

Ryabinin, who oversees construction permits and land sales as the head of City Hall's Control Committee, is the most senior Moscow official to have been targeted by investigators since Luzhkov became mayor in 1992, and the case is being closely watched for signs that the Kremlin might be trying to unseat Luzhkov.

"This looks like a politically motivated order because a fight is going on between various factions of the [federal] government," Sergei Mitrokhin, head of the opposition Yabloko party and a former Moscow City Duma deputy, told The Moscow Times on Sunday.

Luzhkov met with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Saturday for talks that included development plans for Vnukovo Airport and the shortage of kindergartens in the city, according to a transcript published on the government's web site. No mention was made of Ryabinin.

Ryabinin, 51, earned about $800,000 last year, nearly three times more than Luzhkov, according to an income declaration that he filed recently under a Kremlin-ordered anti-corruption drive. He also owns a dacha with about 400 square meters and a piece of land covering 5,000 square meters.

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