

New Probes Into 5 Journalists' Deaths

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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Alexander Bastrykin signaling during an interview in this file photo. Bastrykin had a closed-door meeting with the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists over journalist murders. **M. Stulov**

The Investigative Committee said Thursday that probes have been reopened into the deaths of five journalists after it received new information from a U.S. media watchdog.

The decision was made after a meeting between agency head Alexander Bastrykin and representatives of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, the Investigative Committee said in a [statement](#).

Media activists welcomed the news but voiced doubt that it would lead to tangible results.

The five deaths, occurring between 2001 and 2006, include Valery Ivanov and Alexei Sidorov, both editors of the Tolyatti-based Tolyatinskoye Obozreniye newspaper. Ivanov was shot in 2002, and his successor Sidorov was stabbed a year later.

Investigations also will be reopened into the 2001 shooting of Eduard Markevich, editor of the

Sverdlovsk region Novy Reft newspaper; Natalya Skryl, a business reporter beaten to death in Taganrog in 2002; and Tula reporter Vagif Kochetkov, who died in early 2006.

Nina Ognianova, a spokeswoman for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said her group had presented investigators the results of its own [investigation](#) and pinpointed flaws in the investigators' work.

"We asked them questions which they had never answered," she said by telephone, adding that committee officials did not say during Tuesday's meeting that they would reopen the investigations.

"We are very pleased that they are picking this up now, and we hope that this will lead to solving those crimes," she said.

The investigations were decided after Bastrykin ordered a review of the cases, the Investigative Committee said.

Bastrykin held a closed-door meeting Tuesday with a delegation headed by Committee to Protect Journalists chairman Paul Steiger.

Bastrykin told the attendees that bringing the killers to justice was a matter of honor and "of proving our professionalism," the Committee to Protect Journalists said on its web site.

He also said a new investigator has taken over an inquiry into the 2004 murder of Forbes Russia editor Paul Klebnikov.

The Investigative Committee announced after the meeting that it had identified the killer of Chechen human rights activist Natalya Estemirova.

Earlier this month, investigators announced the reopening of the case of Novaya Gazeta reporter and State Duma Deputy Yuri Shchekochikhin, who died of a mysterious illness in 2003.

Boris Timoshenko from the Glasnost Defense Foundation said Thursday's development was good news but he doubted that it would lead to any convictions.

"We have heard a lot of good-will statements in the past that had no effect on solving those crimes," he said by telephone.

The Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Russia eighth on an index of countries where journalists are killed regularly and governments fail to solve the crimes. On its web site, it lists 52 journalists as being killed because of their work in Russia since 1992.

The Investigative Committee said Thursday that it understands the media's importance in building a democratic society and that journalists are often subjected to threats while doing their work.

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