

Reports: Baturina Rents Austrian House

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Inteko billionaire Yelena Baturina mysteriously rented a humble residence in a village some 50 kilometers south of Vienna together with Inteko vice president Oleg Soloshchansky, Austrian media reported.

In March, Baturina, wife of former Mayor Yury Luzhkov, rented a 150-square-meter house in the center of Breitenbrunn, which has less than 2,000 inhabitants, but nobody in the village remembers seeing her there, Vienna's Die Presse newspaper reported Friday.

The landlord, Josef Kloyber, said the one-year rental contract had been canceled recently. "[Baturina's] lawyer called and asked for an annulment," he was quoted as saying.

Kloyber also said he had never seen his tenants because all paperwork was done through an agent. The only thing they added to the two-story building was a couch set, he said.

The report also said Baturina, Soloshchansky, who is the No. 2 executive at Inteko, and a third unidentified Russian citizen are registered residents in the village. It did not say where it got

the information from.

A day earlier, Vienna's Kurier newspaper reported that Baturina had registered a residency in Breitenbrunn, adding that the village mayor had never seen her. "Otherwise I would have made her an honorary citizen," Mayor Josef Tröllinger was quoted as saying.

Both Tröllinger and Kloyber did not reply to requests for comment Friday.

Spokespeople at Inteko did not answer repeated calls and did not reply to e-mailed questions.

The reports come days after President Dmitry Medvedev fired Luzhkov following allegations that Inteko owes much of its success in Moscow's property market to the marriage of its boss. Analysts expect that the company will face an uphill struggle to defend its position.

Moscow law enforcement authorities have opened corruption investigations into several City Hall officials in recent months, and speculation has been rife that Luzhkov and Baturina might relocate to Austria, where Baturina owns a posh chalet in the western ski resort of Kitzbühel.

But it was unclear why Baturina would choose to register a residence in an obscure village at the other end of the country.

Breitenbrunn, however, is just a short drive from Vienna's Schwechat Airport, and local media reported in 2008 that Baturina set up a family trust called Beneco in the Austrian capital.

Last week, Inteko denied a report by French magazine L'Express that Beneco was a vehicle to move Baturina's assets out of the country.

On Friday, the company denied a report by Kurier that it was interested in buying a luxury hotel in the southern Austrian state of Carinthia. "This is the latest nonsense," Inteko spokesman Gennady Terebkov told Interfax.

Baturina and Luzhkov have never made a secret of their love for Austria. It was at her chalet that Luzhkov spent a weeklong vacation to celebrate his 74th birthday the week before he was fired.

But Baturina might soon move out of the chalet because of privacy concerns. "The house is quite close to the street, and she does not like it when strangers peek into the windows," Baturina's lawyer in Kitzbühel, Emilio Stock, told Die Presse.

The German Embassy has denied visas to several city officials wishing to travel to a major real estate fair in Munich on Monday, Interfax reported Friday.

Consular officials did not grant travel documents to six of the 40 delegates planning to visit the Expo Real 2010 trade fair, the report said, citing an unidentified City Hall official.

The official did not rule out that the visa denial was linked to Luzhkov's firing.

Luzhkov had planned to attend the conference, which traditionally has a large presence by Inteko. After he was fired, City Hall said the delegation would be headed by First Deputy Mayor Yuri Roslyak.

The German Embassy called the report exaggerated and said visas were denied only to applicants who failed to prove that they belonged to the delegation. "Applicants will only be denied a visa if they make false statements," embassy spokesman Neidhard Höfer-Wissing told The Moscow Times.

He added that German officials would "not in their wildest dreams" deny visas to members of an official Russian delegation.

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