

# Saratov District Boss Held for Murder

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The head of the Saratov region's most prosperous district was detained ahead of local elections on suspicion of ordering a murder, though a local lawmaker said the move might be his own party's attempt to push him from the race.

Mikhail Lysenko, a United Russia member who heads the Engels district, was held on suspicion of ordering a murder several years ago, the local Investigative Committee said [in a statement Sunday](#), without elaborating.

Investigators think Lysenko was the ringleader of a mafia group, established in the 1990s, an Interior Ministry source said, Interfax reported. Law enforcement officers have been tracking the group for months and have detained at least 10 low-ranking members and an unspecified number of its leaders, the source said.

The probe is ongoing, and more local officials face preliminary investigations, the news agency said. Saratov Governor Pavel Ipatov said Monday that "similar" crime groups might be busted in other major cities in the region, Interfax reported.

Lysenko's political opponents could be using "anti-criminal purges" to remove him from the district elections in March, said Olga Alimova, deputy head of the Communist Party's faction in the Saratov region legislature, [Kommersant reported Monday](#).

Local crime hit the media spotlight nationwide after a gruesome murder of 12 in the Krasnodar region village of Kushchyovskaya, which officials say was perpetrated by a criminal gang that had terrorized residents there for years.

Lysenko, 50, has occupied his post since 2001. Since he took the post, living standards in the Engels district became the highest in the region, Kommersant reported.

But Lysenko has been clashing publicly with the local branch of the United Russia party since at least last year, and the party was looking to replace him with a more easily "controllable" candidate, Kommersant reported, citing unidentified local political analysts.

Lysenko sat on the political council of the local branch of United Russia but was demoted to a regular member in 2008 for his "independence," a source in Saratov's party branch, who refused to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue, told The Moscow Times.

Krasnodar region investigators have solved the murder of Boris Moskvich, head of the local Kushchyovsky district, who was shot dead in 2002 shortly after being elected, the Investigative Committee said in a statement Monday.

An unidentified local resident killed Moskvich because of a disagreement about the elections' outcome, investigators said. The suspect is not linked to people suspected in this month's murder of 12 in Kushchyovskaya, they said.

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