

Medvedev Warily Chimes In on Turf War

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President Dmitry Medvedev carefully weighed in Monday on a turf war between the Investigative Committee and Prosecutor General's Office, which clashed over an illegal gambling ring in the Moscow region allegedly protected by local police and prosecutors.

Medvedev called for people linked to the gambling den to be punished, but also threatened to fire officials who proclaim the suspects guilty ahead of a trial.

"Pressuring the investigation by employing mass media is unacceptable. Those caught doing this will be fired regardless of their rank and position," Medvedev said at a meeting with top law enforcement officials in Moscow.

He also called for an investigation in a "quiet and calm manner."

The Investigative Committee, separated from the Prosecutor General's Office in December, launched an attack on Moscow region prosecutors this month, linking them to the gambling network.

The suspects denied all charges, and the Prosecutor General's Office attempted to close

the cases and slammed investigators in public statements.

But it also suspended the prime suspects, Moscow region Prosecutor General Alexander Mokhov and his first deputy, Alexander Ignatenko, pending an internal check, an agency spokeswoman said Monday, Interfax reported.

Investigators claimed earlier that the alleged organizer of the gambling den, Ivan Nazarov, paid for posh birthday celebrations and overseas trips for Mokhov and Ignatenko, as well as tours by their subordinates and family members. Nazarov was formally charged with fraud Monday.

Mokhov reiterated Monday his previous claim that he has paid for all his trips out of his own pocket, and said he has provided paperwork to prove it to Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika.

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