

Yabloko Deputy Accused of Bribery

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A Yabloko party official has been detained in Yekaterinburg on suspicion of extorting a bribe from a real estate developer that he opposed at public rallies — a story the party has denounced as a sham.

Maxim Petlin, a City Duma deputy and leader of the local Yabloko branch, was detained Tuesday with his aide Andrei Panteleyev while accepting part of a 3 million ruble (\$100,000) bribe from Forum Group, Interfax reported Thursday, citing Yekaterinburg City Hall.

But Yabloko said the sting was a frame-up because Petlin was only passed a bag without being informed that there was cash inside. Federal Security Service officers apprehended Petlin as soon as he took the bag.

Petlin, who has staged regular opposition Strategy 31 rallies in the city, has organized protests against Forum Group's plans to transform a Yekaterinburg park into a shopping mall, the party said.

Petlin faces up to 15 years in prison if charged and convicted of large-scale fraud. The FSB has searched the local offices of Petlin and Yabloko, the party said.

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