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Prosecutor Won't Let Ex-Employee Testify

By Alexandra Odynova

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The Prosecutor General's Office has barred a former prosecutor from striking a plea bargain with investigators in which he would testify against his former colleagues while partially admitting guilt to charges against him, news reports said Wednesday.

All plea bargains have to be approved by prosecutors, and the latest development signals that the Prosecutor General's Office remains determined to get the upper hand in a three-month turf war with the Investigative Committee.

Dmitry Urumov, a former senior official in the Moscow region Prosecutor's Office, petitioned for the plea bargain after he was detained last week in connection with an illegal gambling case, his lawyer Yury Mikhailov told Interfax on Wednesday.

But Deputy Prosecutor General Viktor Grin turned down the request, saying Urumov needed to admit to the charges fully, not partially, Mikhailov said.

Mikhailov did not specify whom his client wanted to implicate, saying only that Urumov "was ready to testify against a certain group of people."

Urumov has now appealed to Prosecutor General Yury Chaika, who kept silent on the matter Wednesday, the report said.

A dozen Moscow region prosecutors have been implicated in the gambling case since the Investigative Committee initiated a crackdown in February, accusing them and local police officials of providing protection to illegal casinos.

The conflict is widely seen as an escalation of long-simmering tensions between the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor General's Office. The agencies used to form a single organization, and President Dmitry Medvedev split them in two in January.

Meanwhile, investigators have detained two more former Moscow region prosecutors, Roman Nishchemenko and Oleg Bazylyan, Interfax reported Wednesday. The two resigned last month after being implicated in the case.

More arrests are expected to follow. "A number of senior Moscow prosecutors and Moscow region police officials might face detention in connection with the case," an unidentified law enforcement official told Interfax, without elaborating.

Four former prosecutors, including Urumov, are now being held in custody, and two others have been placed on a federal wanted list. Five prosecutors have been reprimanded, and the Moscow region's top prosecutor, Alexander Mokhov, has been demoted.

The gambling ring's suspected mastermind, Ivan Nazarov, was detained in February and has entered a plea bargain with investigators, Kommersant reported earlier this month. Officials have not commented on the report.

The Investigative Committee said in March that the son of Prosecutor General Yury Chaika, Artyom, was also suspected of being involved in the gambling ring. But it backtracked a week later after President Dmitry Medvedev met with Yury Chaika and Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin and reprimanded them for allowing their conflict to spill into the open.

Deputy Prosecutor General Alexander Buksman reported to the State Duma on his agency's work Wednesday. He did not mention the gambling case.

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