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Ex-Yukos Investigator Asked to Check Khodorkovsky's Appeal

By Alexandra Odynova

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A senior investigator who briefly headed the probe into the second Yukos case has been assigned to check reports that the verdict in the case was illegally imposed on the judge.

Alexander Drymanov of the Investigative Committee said in a statement that he was looking into jailed former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky's complaint about alleged mishandling of the case, Gazeta.ru reported late Monday.

Khodorkovsky, jailed on fraud and tax evasion charges in 2005 along with his business partner Platon Lebedev, was convicted in December of theft and money laundering in a separate case by Moscow district Judge Viktor Danilkin.

Danilkin's aide Natalya Vasilyeva said in February that the verdict was imposed on Danilkin by his superiors at the Moscow City Court. Following the claim, Khodorkovsky filed a request that an investigation be opened into the judge, as well as the prosecutors and investigators

involved in the trial.

Noting that Drymanov headed the probe into the Yukos case in 2007, Khodorkovsky's lawyer Vadim Klyuvgant called his assignment to investigate the complaint a "mockery" of justice, Gazeta.ru said. Drymanov only spent a month on the long-running case, Vedomosti reported in 2008.

Drymanov could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Khodorkovsky's hope for swift release hung by a thread as Moscow's Preobrazhensky District Court refused to look into his parole request, citing insufficient paperwork, Interfax said Monday.

Khodorkovsky and Lebedev are waiting to be transported to prisons outside Moscow to serve their jail terms. If sent away from the capital before a Moscow court accepts their requests for parole, they will have to refile them again in the region where they are serving their sentences in.

Representatives for both businessmen said Tuesday that they had refiled the requests with the Moscow court, which only confirmed receiving Lebedev's application.

The two ex-Yukos bosses did not plead guilty, but that is not mandatory for release on parole. Hopes that the two may be freed were stirred in May after President Dmitry Medvedev said he sees no danger in Khodorkovsky's release and government mouthpiece NTV aired an unexpectedly balanced report about the Yukos case.

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