

# Denial in Politkovskaya Case

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A retired police investigator arrested this week on suspicion of organizing the 2006 murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya has denied wrongdoing, Itar-Tass reported Thursday.

Dmitry Pavlyuchenkov's lawyer, Tamara Kuchma, added that her client had not officially been charged with any crime.

Pavlyuchenkov was detained late Tuesday, and a Moscow district court was expected to authorize his arrest Friday, the Investigative Committee said.

The decision, initially expected Thursday, was delayed at Pavlyuchenkov's request to give the defense more time to gather information about his health and family, the RPSI legal news agency reported.

Pavlyuchenkov is suspected of cobbling together a hit squad of four people to kill Politkovskaya at the request of an unknown mastermind. At the time, Pavlyuchenkov worked as a senior Moscow investigator, and he later testified against the four-member team at a trial that resulted in their acquittal. The team could face a retrial.

Politkovskaya, 48, was known for her biting criticism of the Kremlin, including in the Western media, and her investigative reporting on rights abuses in the country, especially in the North Caucasus.

International human rights groups have championed her killing as a prime example of rampant rights abuse in Russia that they say is condoned by the Kremlin.

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