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Magnitsky Foe Held On Bribery Charges

By Alexandra Odynova

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A police investigator implicated in the prosecution of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky has been charged with extorting a $3 million bribe, officials said Wednesday.

Nelli Dmitriyeva, a senior investigator with the Interior Ministry's Moscow branch, is suspected of extorting the bribe while holding an inquiry into contraband medical equipment, the Investigative Committee said in a statement. Her arrest was sanctioned by a Moscow court on Wednesday.

Dmitriyeva is one of 60 officials linked to the 2009 death of Magnitsky, 37, who died in detention after being beaten badly by guards and being refused treatment for existing health problems. Dozens of the officials have been banned from entering the United States. It was unclear whether Dmitriyeva is among them.

Dmitriyeva's name topped a list of investigators identified on a search warrant for a June 4, 2007, raid of Firestone Duncan's office, which employed Magnitsky and represented Hermitage Capital, a Hermitage spokesman told The Moscow Times.

During the course of the search, the investigators confiscated documents that were subsequently used to steal a Hermitage subsidiary, he said.

Later, in 2009, Dmitriyeva was part of the team that prosecuted Magnitsky.

Investigators said Wednesday that unidentified middlemen linked to Dmitriyeva were caught by the Federal Security Service in August while accepting the $3 million bribe. The money actually consisted of 50,000 euros and $1,000, and the rest was fake banknotes.

Prosecutors protested against her arrest Wednesday.

Dmitriyeva pleaded not guilty during the closed-door court hearing, Interfax reported. She also offered to testify against "high-ranking officials," but said she would not accuse her boss, Ivan Glukhov, head of city police's main investigative directorate, of wrongdoing, the Rapsi news agency reported. She said her arrest was an attempt to force her to testify against him.

Glukhov is also on the Magnitsky blacklist.

Notably, the investigation against Dmitriyeva was initiated at a high level, by Investigative Committee deputy chief Vasily Piskaryov, the committee said.

Dmitriyeva faces up to 15 years in jail if convicted of extorting the bribe.

Meanwhile, Dutch lawmakers urged Dutch Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal to ban the 60 Russian officials implicated in the Magnitsky case from entering the Netherlands in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Dutch Parliament in July.

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