The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Tymoshenko Faces Fresh Charge

October 13, 2011



Ukraine's state security service on Thursday directly linked jailed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to another criminal probe, alleging her involvement in running up a $405 million debt to Russia on behalf of the Ukrainian state.

The charge, which relates to events 15 years ago, was first aired last June when the SBU linked the case to the affairs of Unified Energy Systems of Ukraine, an energy company which the imprisoned politician once ran.

But in a new twist on Thursday, only two days after she was jailed for seven years for abuse-of-office in a trial that has outraged Western governments, the SBU named her and another former prime minister Pavlo Lazarenko in connection with the new case.

The SBU'S announcement, so soon after the popular opposition leader's imprisonment, appeared in line with efforts by the leadership of President Viktor Yanukovich to present her prosecution as part of a drive to end high-level malpractice.

Yanukovich, who beat his arch-rival narrowly for the presidency in February 2010, denies Western charges that her trial was politically motivated.

Tymoshenko, who denies any wrongdoing, has said the trial was a "lynching" by Yanukovich and by those whom she describes as the "criminal oligarchy" backing him.

"The main investigative department of the SBU has opened a criminal case in respect of citizens Tymoshenko and Lazarenko," the department's head, Ivan Derevyanko, was quoted by Interfax news agency as saying.

Lazarenko, who was prime minister for just over a year from mid-1996, is currently serving a prison sentence in the United States for money laundering and other offences.

Derevyanko was quoted as saying that Tymoshenko "conspired" with Lazarenko to run up a debt of $405 million to Russia's Defence Ministry from the Ukrainian state budget.

She had been formally charged with the offence in her police detention cell on Wednesday, he said.

Tymoshenko ran Unified Energy Systems of Ukraine, which once imported Russian gas for resale in Ukraine, in 1995-96 long before she became prime minister. It was that link which earned her the nickname of "gas princess."

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/10/13/tymoshenko-faces-fresh-charge-a10168