

Businessman Flees to Georgia, Says FSB Extorted \$1.3M

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A Siberian lawmaker and businessman said he has fled to Georgia after the Federal Security Service extorted 40 million rubles (\$1.3 million) from him in exchange for closing a "fabricated" criminal case against him.

Dmitry Gordeyev, 33, a United Russia deputy with the Novosibirsk city legislature and head of a local construction company, said he ended up in Georgia after fleeing Russian agents at a Turkish airport while being escorted home from Thailand — and if he hadn't, he would have joined thousands of Russian businesspeople in jail after falling victim to government-sanctioned corruption.

The case could raise new concerns about the business climate in Russia, where tens of thousands of businesspeople are jailed after apparently falling victim to government-sanctioned corruption.

Gordeyev fled to Thailand in March to avoid prosecution and extortion and sent multiple complaints to Russian authorities about corruption at the FSB's regional branch, he [said](#) on his personal web site.

On Sept. 4, "people who introduced themselves as law enforcement officers" visited him at a Thai hospital and forced him to go with them to Russia, promising that criminal prosecution against him would end if he retracted his official complaints about the FSB, Gordeyev told The Moscow Times in a Skype call without the video link.

The visitors also confiscated Gordeyev's laptop, on which he had "enough compromising materials to throw this gang" — several regional FSB officers — "behind bars for about 10 years each," Gordeyev [wrote](#) on his LiveJournal blog on Oct. 8.

He was escorted out of Thailand via Malaysia and Turkey and managed to flee his companions in the transit hall of a Turkey airport on Sept. 5 after passing passport control, he said, adding that he then flew to Georgia with an electronic ticket bought for him by a friend.

A spokesman for the regional branch of the FSB refused to comment on Gordeyev's story Friday.

A spokeswoman for the regional branch of the Investigative Committee said Gordeyev was on a wanted list on fraud charges. She refused to elaborate.

In spring 2010, regional investigators opened a criminal case against Gordeyev, head of the local construction company MIG-1, on charges of defrauding another local construction company, Plyus, of 11.4 million rubles (\$370,000) between July 2006 and April 2007, Interfax [reported](#) in April.

On his personal web site, Gordeyev posted copies of official and unofficial documents that, he said, showed he had fulfilled all his obligations to Plyus head Pavel Zenkovich and thereby proved that the criminal case was fabricated. Among those documents were receipts written by Zenkovich and a statement that he had no claims against Gordeyev.

Gordeyev said the case was opened with the assistance of the FSB's economic security service, which tracks corruption crimes, after Zenkovich "pretended to have remembered" that he had failed to fulfill obligations to Plyus worth 11.4 million rubles, costing Plyus 40 million rubles (\$1.3 million) in damages.

He said the FSB has put pressure on him since December 2009 and told him to pay Zenkovich 40 million rubles unofficially in exchange for the closure of the case over 11.4 million rubles. The case was opened after he "didn't react," he said.

"After that, I decided it was better to pay," Gordeyev said, adding that he had.

Repeated calls to Plyus's office in Novosibirsk went unanswered Friday afternoon.

Plyus employees whom Gordeyev is accused of defrauding are former FSB officers, he said.

Meanwhile, Interfax, citing an unidentified law enforcement official, [suggested](#) Thursday that Gordeyev was not in Georgia. The official said an extradition request had been sent to the

country where the authorities thought Gordeyev really was. The official did not identify the country.

Asked about the report, Gordeyev exclaimed over Skype, "Do they think I am an idiot and don't know where I am?" He then switched on a Georgian-language radio station in the background.

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