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Average Bribe Amounts to $8,000, Police Say

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The average bribe in cases investigated by police stands at 250,000 rubles ($8,000) this year, but could reach six times that amount in major cases, Deputy Interior Minister Sergei Bulavin said Tuesday.

Bulavin voiced the statistics in the State Duma, where he presented a bill to speed up the return of money extorted from businessmen, Interfax said.

Entrepreneurs who report bribery to police usually have to provide their own money for sting operations to bust the extortionists because police do not have enough funds, he said.

But the money then becomes official evidence and gets stuck in bureaucratic limbo for the duration of the investigation, which often lasts several years. The new bill proposes to allow returning the evidence to its rightful owner before the investigation is wrapped up, Bulavin said.

The money may, indeed, be a significant loss because the average bribe reached 1.5 million

rubles in major cases this year, an uptick from 1.2 million rubles last year, Bulavin told the lawmakers.

The bill was approved in a first reading Tuesday. No dates were set for the next two hearings.

In July, the Interior Ministry put the average size of bribe paid to a government or corporate official at 293,000 rubles in the first half of 2011. Bulavin did not specify on Tuesday whether the 250,000 ruble figure constituted a decrease in bribe size or was unrelated to the earlier figure.

In February, Moscow police said the average bribe in the city stood at 600,000 rubles, compared to 30,000 rubles elsewhere in Russia.

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