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Luzhkov to Be Questioned in Bank of Moscow Investigation

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Former Mayor Yury Luzhkov said a summons for police questioning in connection with a Bank of Moscow investigation is retaliation for his criticism of President Dmitry Medvedev, news reports said.

The Interior Ministry sent the summons to Luzhkov late last week, a ministry spokeswoman said in comments published Tuesday in Kommersant.

Luzhkov will be questioned as a witness — not a suspect — in the investigation of former management of the bank, acquired by VTB Group in February. The Luzhkov-linked bank came ridden with bad loans that required a state bailout of $14 billion.

The ministry scheduled the questioning for this Friday, but Luzhkov's lawyer Genri Reznik said the former mayor was giving a series of lectures on economics in London and would not be able to meet with investigators before late November, Kommersant reported.

The bank investigation deals with a loan of 12.7 billion rubles ($416 million) in city funds that

Bank of Moscow extended to Premier Estate bank. Investigators say the money eventually wound up in the personal account of Luzhkov's billionaire wife, Yelena Baturina.

Luzhkov spoke Monday about "weighty reasons to believe" that the case is punishment for an interview he gave to Radio Free Europe's Russian service last week, Interfax reported.

Luzhkov said in the interview that Medvedev, who is expected to switch places with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin after the presidential election in March, would be a weak leader. He also predicted that United Russia would perform poorly in the State Duma elections in December.

Medvedev, who fired Luzhkov over "a loss of confidence" in September 2010, has not commented on the allegations.

Luzhkov's wife and two children moved to Britain soon after his removal, but Luzhkov told Komsomolskaya Pravda last month that he still lived in Moscow.

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