# Tymoshenko Faces Inquiry Over 1996 Contract Killing

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KIEV — Ukrainian prosecutors are to investigate whether former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, jailed for abuse of power, was involved in the murder of a member of parliament, a senior prosecutor said.

Tymoshenko's spokeswoman Natalya Lisova dismissed the allegation, saying: "This is absurd. The government desire to get rid of political opposition has crossed all limits."

The investigation is into the 1996 contract killing of Deputy Yevhen Shcherban, Deputy Prosecutor General Renat Kuzmin said Saturday. Shcherban was shot in an airport.

Kuzmin said prosecutors had evidence that Tymoshenko could be involved in the crime, along with Pavlo Lazarenko, who was prime minister at the time and has since been jailed in the United States for fraud and money laundering.

"We have a transcript of a witness being questioned in the United States where the witness states directly that the murder of Shcherban was paid for from Lazarenko and Tymoshenko's

accounts," Kuzmin said, private news agency Unian reported. "We have the documents and want to check them."

Aides to Lazarenko have been quoted in Ukrainian media as saying he denies any involvement with the murder.

This month, a district court in Kiev found Tymoshenko guilty of abusing her power in forcing through a 2009 gas deal with Russia and sentenced her to seven years in prison, a verdict she is appealing.

She has dismissed all charges against her as part of political vendetta by Viktor Yanukovych who narrowly beat her in the 2010 presidential election.

Tymoshenko rose to prominence in the 1990s as a major gas trader under Lazarenko's government and was once a member of his political party.

State prosecutors have already resurrected a previously closed criminal case linked to her activities at the time that they say left the state budget with significant debt.

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