

'Witness' Luzhkov Returns to Moscow

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Luzhkov speaking at a book talk several years ago. The ousted mayor returned to Moscow to be questioned in an embezzlement case. **Igor Tabakov**

Former Mayor Yury Luzhkov on Wednesday delivered on his promise to return to Russia to face questioning in a criminal case over the alleged embezzlement of 13 billion rubles (\$427 million) from city funds, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Luzhkov is being summoned as a witness, but said he did not rule out becoming a suspect in what he calls a fabricated case.

"If there's a man, there's always an article [of the Criminal Code] for him," he told the news agency, quoting a popular Russian saying. "But I have openly defended my family honor in the past, and will continue to do so."

No date for his questioning was set. A copy of the note that Luzhkov sent to the Interior Ministry, published by RIA-Novosti, said he would be willing to appear any time between Nov. 11 and Nov. 22, except for Nov. 17, when his lawyer will be out of the country.

Investigators say the money in question was loaned by the city government in 2009

to Premier Estate — an allegedly bogus company — but instead wound up in the account of Luzhkov's billionaire wife, Yelena Baturina.

Baturina, who has denied wrongdoing, has also been summoned for questioning. The entrepreneur sold her thriving real estate business in Moscow after her husband was ousted in 2010 and moved to London. She said she would also come to speak with investigators, but did not say when.

President Dmitry Medvedev removed Luzhkov from office for the humiliating reason of a "loss of confidence." In recent months, Luzhkov has increasingly criticized the Kremlin, claiming that his case is politically motivated.

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