

Ousted Police Chief Faces State Scrutiny

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Investigators have searched the apartment and dacha of former St. Petersburg police chief Mikhail Sukhodolsky, Kommersant [reported](#) Wednesday.

The searches were part of an official inquiry into accusations of fraud and abuse of power against the management of an Interior Ministry branch providing security services.

Interior Ministry investigators also detained Andrei Komissarov, general director of Okhrana, Izvestia [reported](#) late Tuesday, though a court later decided not to arrest him.

Okhrana is part of the Interior Ministry. It was created and formerly overseen by Sukhodolsky before his dismissal by President Dmitry Medvedev in February.

Meanwhile, Sukhodolsky and his son Grigory are receiving medical treatment in Israel, Kommersant said.

The younger Sukhodolsky is co-owner of Okhrana supplier Tekhnologii Bezopasnosti CJSC

and is a witness in the criminal case against Okhrana.

Mikhail Sukhodolsky will be on vacation till May, a source close to the former police official [told](#) RIA-Novosti on Wednesday.

Fontanka.ru on Wednesday published two photographs of Sukhodolsky eating at an Israeli restaurant last week.

The unidentified reader who provided the photos said he heard Sukhodolsky and his companions raising a toast to celebrate that all of them are "alive and in good health," Fontanka.ru [reported](#).

In December, the Interior Ministry opened a criminal case against Okhrana director Komissarov and former Okhrana director Dmitry Lozhkin.

At issue was Okhrana's purchase of goods through intermediaries, which allegedly provided kickbacks to the participants in the deal, Izvestia reported.

Those purchases caused Okhrana to lose about 140 million rubles (\$4.8 million) in five years, Izvestia said.

Sometime after Sukhodolsky's firing in February, investigators searched his apartment on Pervy Zavachatyevsky Pereulok in central Moscow and his dacha in the Noginsk district of the Moscow region, Izvestia said.

The newspaper added that Sukhodolsky was away at the time of both searches.

Sukhodolsky lost his job following the beating death of a 15-year-old boy in police custody.

He had been embroiled in a long-running power struggle with Interior Ministry head Rashid Nurgaliyev.

Sukhodolsky had reportedly plotted to replace Nurgaliyev, his direct superior, after the presidential election.

Observers speculated that the boy's beating had been used as an excuse to force him out.

Pavel Zaitsev, the lawyer for Sukhodolsky's son, said he had information showing that unidentified officials were "putting pressure on the suspects" in the Okhrana case to make them cooperate in "fabricating a sleazy tale" about his client.

Zaitsev compared the accusations to similar ones against Russia's top prison official, Alexander Reimer, which journalists linked to Reimer's decision to fire three dozen senior prison officials in 2010.

Both Reimer and Grigory Sukhodolsky were accused of sexually abusing female colleagues.

Earlier this month, investigators refused to open a criminal case against Reimer, saying he committed no crime.

Yevgeny Vyshenkov, a former police investigator and deputy head of the St. Petersburg

Agency for Investigative Journalism, said the searches at Sukhodolsky's home and dacha were a sign that the former police chief and the suspects in the case against Okhrana would be brought to trial.

At the very least, Okhrana's management and Grigory Sukhodolsky will "find themselves in the dock," and Mikhail Sukhodolsky could conceivably join them there, Vyshenkov told The Moscow Times.

The effort to discredit Sukhodolsky may have been masterminded by forces in the Interior Ministry and the Kremlin that "want to see [Nurgaliyev] in the top post forever," Vyshenkov said.

He said Sukhodolsky went to Israel because it is "where he can safely wait out the events," and he added that the former police chief has "an instinct for self-preservation."

Vyshenkov's take on the situation: "This is a clan fight inside the Garden Ring."

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