

Fraudsters Claimed Relationship With Top Officials in Extortion Scheme

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Three fraudsters were arrested for attempting to extort millions of rubles from the families of prisoners.
Maxim Stulov

Police arrested three suspects who claimed to be relatives of high-ranking government officials in a scheme to extort money from the families of prisoners in exchange for their amnesty.

The suspects, who told their targets that they were related to officials in the presidential administration and a former prosecutor general, demanded \$900,000 for help freeing prisoners, said a spokesperson for the federal economic crimes unit, Interfax reported Wednesday.

The intended victims of the scheme informed the police of the fraudsters' demands, and police arrested the suspects in a sting operation at a Moscow cafe. A criminal case with charges of attempted extortion has been opened against the three suspects.

On Tuesday, the Prosecutor General's office sent a case to court in which a man is suspected

of having set up a fake anti-corruption council and stealing the dues paid to his fraudulent organization, Interfax reported.

Prosecutors said Roman Semyonov posted fake documents online attesting to the existence of a presidential anti-corruption council that was part of the Public Chamber. Semyonov collected 800,000 rubles (\$27,000) in dues from several sources and pocketed the money.

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