Federal Investigators Take Over Navalny Case

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Alexander Bastrykin **Maxim Stulov**

Hours after the nation's top investigator said a criminal case against opposition leader Alexei Navalny had been closed "on the sly," he ordered it transferred to federal authorities in Moscow.

Speaking at an Investigative Committee board meeting in St. Petersburg, chief Alexander Bastrykin said the case, in which Navalny was suspected of using illegal "corporate raiding" tactics to pressure a state company in the Kirov region into a disadvantageous contract, had been closed without justification.

Local investigators opened the case, which alleged that Navalny caused the KirovLes timber firm to incur financial losses, in August 2009. At the time, Navalny was serving as an adviser to the region's governor, Nikita Belykh.

That case was closed in January 2011, with no charges filed. In May 2011, the Investigative Committee ordered the case reopened, only to close it once again. Last month, it was reopened again.

"You have a person with the last name Navalny. You had a criminal case against this person, and you closed it on the sly," Bastrykin said, addressing the Kirov region representative, Interfax reported.

He pressed investigators to tell him whether they had been intimidated into closing the case.

"[If you're] weak, afraid, being pressured, report it," Bastrykin said.

Soon afterward, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said the case had been transferred to the federal body's main investigative unit.

Earlier this week, more legal action related to Navalny's ties with Belykh was threatened by Konstantin Goloskokov leader of the youth group Nashi.

He said Navalny should be prosecuted for allegedly not paying taxes on a 40,000 euro ($50,400) payment from Belykh and conducting a paid "attack" on state oil firm Rosneft. Navalny and Belykh have denied breaking the law.

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