

Former Cop Charged in Politkovskaya Murder

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Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin discussing the charges against former police Colonel Dmitry Pavlyuchenkov.

Six years after outspoken journalist Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in a Moscow apartment building, investigators announced Monday that charges would be brought against a former police officer suspected of conspiring to murder her.

According to investigators, former police Colonel Dmitry Pavlyuchenkov used his official powers to keep tabs on Politkovskaya, whose journalistic work exposed corrupt officialdom and brought to light atrocities committed by Chechnya's Moscow-backed authorities.

Pavlyuchenkov found out the address of Politkovskaya's apartment and the routes she usually took and passed this information on to other members of the group plotting her killing, the Investigative Committee said in a statement. He also instructed subordinates to monitor Politkovskaya, according to the charges.

Pavlyuchenkov also acquired the weapon and the ammunition that were later used in the murder, the statement said.

Investigators said Pavlyuchenkov and others rehearsed the Oct. 7, 2006, killing several times and planned an escape route, describing the organization of the murder as "cohesive" and "carefully put together."

Pavlyuchenkov has been charged with murder for hire committed by a group and with illegal weapons trafficking. He will be tried using a "special procedure" because investigators have agreed with him on a plea bargain.

The statement did not specify what punishment Pavlyuchenkov could face under the deal.

Pavlyuchenkov has cooperated extensively with investigators since his arrest in August 2011.

Kommersant reported in February that he has accused billionaire Boris Berezovsky and Chechen rebel envoy Akhmed Zakayev, both of whom live in exile in London, of masterminding Politkovskaya's murder.

British authorities have repeatedly denied Russian requests to extradite Berezovsky and Zakayev, saying they don't believe they would get a fair trial in Russia.

Britain's refusal to extradite them has become a point of tension between the two countries.

Pavlyuchenkov's lawyer, Karen Nersesyan, responded to the charges Monday by saying she hoped for a lenient sentence for her client, citing his poor health and invaluable contribution to the investigation.

"I'm not willing to speculate, but I hope that his punishment will be as lenient as possible," she told Interfax.

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