

# Berezovsky Ally Detained Over \$1.5M Fraud

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A longtime ally of self-exiled tycoon Boris Berezovsky was detained at a Moscow restaurant receiving the first installment of a \$1.5 million kickback to get authorities to close an embezzlement case against a former banker, investigators said Wednesday.

Andrei Ponkin, a former Federal Security Service officer and Berezovsky ally, as well as Telman Alasgarov, deputy head of an Interior Ministry veterans aid fund, were taken into custody upon accepting the 1.5 million ruble (\$50,000) payment, which had been "extorted," investigators said.

The suspects had told the mark, a former board chairman of an unspecified Stavropol bank, that the money would be used to convince authorities to close an embezzlement case against him as well as obtain a "positive conclusion of an inquiry by the Deposit Insurance Agency," the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

The mark, whose identity has not been disclosed, was being investigated over the embezzlement of securities belonging to the bank's charter capital, the statement said. A fraud case has been opened against Ponkin and Alasgarov. They face up to a decade behind bars.

Ponkin was "for a long time a trusted person of Boris Berezovsky," the state-run RIA-Novosti news agency said in a report about the incident, citing an Interior Ministry spokesperson.

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