

Novaya Gazeta Reporter Accused of Mugging Attack

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A journalist for opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta has been arrested on suspicion of assaulting and mugging a pedestrian together with two other people late last month, in what the newspaper called a deliberate provocation.

Investigative reporter Andrei Sukhotin, 24, was implicated by a man named Andrei Visnyakov as being one of three people who attacked him on the street in Moscow's Basmanny district on the evening of Dec. 26 after an argument, Izvestia reported Wednesday, citing a law enforcement source. Visnyakov said the three men beat him up and then took his wallet and fled.

Sukhotin was detained by police on Monday, a law enforcement source told the newspaper.

A police spokeswoman reached by phone Wednesday refused to comment on Sukhotin's alleged involvement in the case, but Novaya Gazeta spokeswoman Nadezhda Prusnkova

confirmed that he had been arrested.

"We are sure that a rude and primitive provocation was organized against our reporter and the paper in general in order to stop Andrei Sukhotin's investigation of embezzlement in the Defense Ministry with the participation of special service officers," Novaya Gazeta said in a statement Wednesday.

The statement also said the newspaper knew the identity of the organizer of the alleged provocation, implying that it was someone implicated in Sukhotin's investigation into the theft of millions of dollars in Defense Ministry funds.

That case, announced by federal investigators in October, is one of the most prominent instances of government corruption in recent years and has led to the arrest of at least seven defense officials and to the firing of Anatoly Serdyukov from his post as defense minister.

The newspaper promised to announce the details of Sukhotin's investigative report in the near future.

With regard to Sukhotin's alleged involvement in the attack, Prusenkova said he did not appear in surveillance footage investigators took from the scene of the crime.

"We are completely confident in Andrei's non-involvement, and we have all the proof — including video footage — that at the moment of the crime he was in another place," she said.

A spokeswoman for the Central Administrative District police would not comment on Sukhotin's alleged involvement and only confirmed that a man had filed a police report with Basmanny district police saying that a group of people had attacked him.

"A criminal case was opened in connection with this," the spokeswoman said.

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