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Liberal Activist Slams Investigators in Written Testimony Ahead of Questioning

By Natalya Krainova

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Former liberal opposition leader Leonid Gozman was questioned Monday as part of the criminal case against outspoken opposition leader and corruption fighter Alexei Navalny, RIA-Novosti reported.

Gozman, former head of the Union of Right Forces party, was questioned over the alleged theft of 100 million rubles in 2007 from his former party by a company headed by Navalny.

He published his written testimony on LiveJournal ahead of the questioning, saying he feared that investigators would impose a gag order on him and calling the Investigative Committee an "instrument of political repression."

In his statement, he said he personally didn't oversee any contracts in 2007 when he was deputy head of the Union of Right Forces' political council. Although he did hear about a contract with Navalny, he said, he didn't personally see it and had no knowledge of its

content.

He also called the charges against Navalny "politically motivated," adding that "this case has nothing to do with defending the lawful rights and interests of citizens or fighting crime."

On Friday, investigators questioned another former Union of Right Forces leader and current Kirov region Governor Nikita Belykh as a witness in the case. They also plan to question Boris Nemtsov, a former senior member in the Union of Right Forces and a well-known liberal opposition leader.

Investigators say that Navalny's advertising company, Allekt, signed a contract with the Union of Right Forces to provide advertising services but never fulfilled the contract's terms.

According to investigators, Allekt also transferred the money to bank accounts of firms that had signs of being shell companies.

The criminal case was opened on fraud charges, which carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Navalny is also a suspect in the criminal probe of the alleged theft of 10,000 cubic meters of timber from the state-owned company KirovLes between May and September 2009, when he was an adviser to Governor Belykh. The KirovLes case was opened on charges of large-scale embezzlement, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

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