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Vasilyeva and Serdyukov Accused of Pressuring Oboronservis Case Witnesses

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A witness in the Oboronservis case has accused former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and Yevgenia Vasilyeva, a key suspect in the Oboronservis fraud case, of pressuring witnesses into giving false testimony.

The allegation was contained in case files being presented Monday at a hearing to decide whether Vasilyeva's house arrest, which began in November 2012, should be extended.

In October, Vasilyeva was indicted on 12 counts, including fraud, money laundering, and exceeding and abusing her authority while serving as the director of Oboronservis, a company that sells off unrequired Defense Ministry property. Serdyukov was fired in November 2012 after the fraud investigation began.

Four witnesses, who have all since been named suspects in the Oboronservis case, were driven

to the city limits last November and deprived of their telephones and credit cards on the orders of Vasilyeva, an unidentified witness told investigators.

Serdyukov was also involved in organizing the intimidation, investigators said, citing the witness's testimony.

Vasilyeva said that there was nothing in the accusations and that if investigators believe that there was intimidation then they should open a criminal case, Interfax reported.

Also on Monday, investigators were given until July 8, 2014 to prepare their case against Vasilyeva and six other suspects, but the question of extending her house arrest is still being reviewed.

Speaking to Vedomosti on Monday via her lawyers, Yevgenia Vasilyeva denied any involvement in the fraudulent sale of state property, dismissed reports of her lavish lifestyle and said that her negative image makes an acquittal unlikely.

Vasilyeva called the allegations against her "unfounded, unsupported and biased," but believes that the authorities are not interested in establishing the truth and said that her chances of getting away unscathed are slim.

She thinks there would be an outbreak of public anger if her case was thrown out as part of the "broad amnesty" being developed to mark the 20th anniversary of the Constitution on Dec. 12.

The amnesty, developed by the Kremlin human rights council, is likely to free thousands of criminals convicted of non-violent offenses, but Vasilyeva doesn't think it will exonerate her.

In addition to the charges against her, investigators seized six pieces of real estate, as well as jewelry and watches worth more than 126 million rubles ($3.9 million) in an effort to compensate for the for losses incurred by the state as a result of Vasilyeva's supposed activities. The losses were estimated at about 3 billion rubles by military investigators.

Vasilyeva dismissed reports about the size of her wealth and said that all of her property was bought before she started working for the ministry, either by herself or by her "wealthy" family.

She said that her apartment on Molochny Pereulok in central Moscow, where she is under house arrest, is not a 13-room luxury property, but rather an ordinary four-room apartment.

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