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Former Prosecutor Details Violations in Magnitsky Case

By Natalya Krainova

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A former senior federal prosecutor has accused her one-time colleagues of illegally intervening in the probe into the 2009 death of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, as well as committing legal violations in connection with other high-profile cases.

Galina Tarasova, who says she was fired from the Prosecutor General's Office in April, said Sergei Bochkaryov, a department head at the agency, phoned Investigative Committee officials "giving them oral orders" and "sending some kind of documents" in connection with the committee's probe into Magnitsky's death.

Two other senior officials at the Prosecutor General's Office — David Kutaliya and Timur Borisov — "obstructed oversight of the probe into Magnitsky's death" by "creating red tape," Tarasova said in an interview published on pro-nationalist news website Russkaya Planeta on Wednesday.

The Prosecutor General's Office is charged with overseeing the work of the Investigative Committee to ensure that investigators do not violate the law while carrying out criminal probes, Tarasova explained. Prosecutors also approve charges before sending a case to court.

Tarasova linked her dismissal to her complaints to superiors about the legal violations committed by her colleagues.

Mikhail Yanenko, spokesman for the Prosecutor General's Office, said by phone that he had read Tarasova's interview but would not comment without a written inquiry. An inquiry submitted by fax on Wednesday afternoon was not answered in time for publication.

Curiously, Tarasova herself appeared on a preliminary version of the Magnitsky list proposed by U.S. congressman Jim McGovern, which included 280 Russian officials accused of being implicated in Magnitsky's death and detention.

Tarasova was on the list for "resisting the application from Mr Magnitsky's mother seeking to compel a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the false arrest, torture and murder of her son and the role of many government officials involved," according to information on the list. As a result of Tarasova's actions, Moscow's Basmanny District Court rejected the complaint by Magnitsky's mother in December 2011, McGovern's list said. But Tarasova was not on the eventually published official part of the list, which included 18 names and came out in April.

The official list was published as a result of the U.S. Magnitsky Act, which stipulates a visa ban and asset freezes for Russian officials implicated in human rights violations, including those purportedly involved in Magnitsky's death and jailing. The act triggered a sharp response from the Russian government, which passed a bill instituting punishment for American human rights violators and, more controversially, banning adoptions of Russian orphans by American couples.

In Wednesday's interview, Tarasova also detailed what she called a "privileged" clan of prosecutors, alleging that a group of about 10 prosecutors started forming in 2007 around Igor Myasnikov, a department head at the Prosecutor General's Office, and his two deputies, David Kutaliya and Magomedrasul Magomedov.

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