

Investigative Committee Wants Tough Punishment for Foreign Meddling in Strategic Firms

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Investigative Committee chief Alexander Bastrykin has proposed amendments to the Criminal Code that would equate foreign control of Russian strategic enterprises with espionage, Vedomosti reported Tuesday.

Under the amendment, anyone involved in facilitating foreign control of a company on the government's strategic enterprise list could be sentenced to prison terms of three to seven years. Investors who evade government approval or knowingly provide false information could expect harsher sentencing.

Perpetrators could face an additional five to 15 years in prison if their actions are shown to have endangered Russian national security.

Sources at the Investigative Committee cite William Browder's case as a compelling reason

for a stricter Criminal Code. Browder, CEO of Hermitage Capital Management, is accused by Russian authorities of using local companies to purchase more than 130 million shares of Gazprom at a below-market price of about 2 billion rubles (\$55 million).

Bastrykin has previously accused foreign investors of meddling with Russia's national security. In an Jan. 14 interview with Rossiiskaya Gazeta, Bastrykin said that foreign investors were creating obstacles for defense firms that they are involved with, which is the reason why some companies are unable to fulfill government orders. He cited the experience of privatized St. Petersburg arms manufacturers. "The trouble is that those involved in privatization were backed by foreigners directly or indirectly. They bought up the Leningrad weapons factories and then just bankrupted them."

Sources at the Investigative Committee said that penalties will be defined more exactly. Ministries involved in the economy have yet to receive the document and no analysis of the proposal's financial consequences has been conducted.

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