

Russian Investigators Reveal New Bribery Allegations Against Jailed Ex-Governor

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Nikita Belykh, March 13, 2007. **AP Photo / Misha Japaridze**

Police have launched a second bribery investigation against former Kirov Governor Nikita Belykh, who's now in jail awaiting trial, according to the news agency RIA Novosti. The announcement came at a hearing on Wednesday, where a judge considered extending Belykh's arrest, as prosecutors prepare their case against the former governor.

Officials said they are merging the new investigation, which they launched earlier this month, with the already ongoing bribery case against Belykh.

An investigator said in court on Wednesday that the new case concerns two separate episodes involving bribery. Belykh denied any wrongdoing, according to the news agency Interfax, insisting that he "never took any bribes and never intends to accept a bribe."

Belykh's lawyer told Interfax that suspects in the new case have already been arrested and are

now in pretrial detention.

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While still governor of Kirov, Belykh was arrested in June 2016 on allegations that he accepted a 400,000-euro (\$444,000) bribe. He allegedly received the money to protect the interests of two companies based in the Kirov region: the Novovyatsky ski factory and the Forestry Management Company. Police later released images of Belykh alongside piles of money in a restaurant in central Moscow.

Belykh has pleaded not guilty and called his arrest a setup.

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