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Moscow Court Asks Reporters to Be 'Tactful' in Covering Ulyukayev Case

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Alexei Ulyukaev **Nikerichev Andrei / Moskva News Agency**

Journalists reporting on the trial of former economy minister Alexei Ulyukayev have been asked by the court to be "more tactful" in how they cover his corruption case.

Ulyukayev, who was the first sitting minister to be arrested since Soviet times, faces 15 years in prison for allegedly demanding a $2 million bribe from the head of oil giant Rosneft, Igor Sechin.

Ulyukayev reportedly threatened to obstruct Rosneft's purchase of a majority stake in Bashneft, another oil company.

He was detained in November last year in a sting operation at Rosneft's headquarters in which he was reportedly caught red-handed.

The case has received widespread attention in the media, especially after state prosecutors read out transcripts of reported conversations between the two men in which Sechin told

Ulyukayev to “take the basket.”

Ulyukayev told the court he thought he was being handed a basket of wine and sausages — not cash — during the sting that led to his arrest. The statement quickly became a meme on social media.

Ahead of the sixth hearing, court spokeswoman Emilia Khil told journalists: “I understand that you want to [report on the case] verbatim.” She then requested journalists to “write more tactfully about the process,” the Mediazona news website reported Wednesday.

Related article: Rosneft CEO Sechin Taped Ulyukayev Conversations in FSB Bribe Sting

The Vedomosti business daily said Khil could not specify how the media's coverage of the trial had failed. But, according to Mediazona, she referred to the transcripts of the reported conversations between Sechin and Ulyukayev read out in earlier court hearings.

She told journalists the warning was her own initiative and had not been ordered from above.

In an interview with the Kommersant daily last week, Sechin said that state prosectors reading the transcripts— including the segment on the “basket"— was “professional idiocy.” He added the trial should be held behind closed doors.

“There are things that should remain secret,” he said.

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