

Kremlin Rallies to Defend Billionaire Kerimov, Held in France for Fraud

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Suleiman Kerimov (r) / Sergey Savostyanov / TASS

The Kremlin has vowed to defend billionaire senator Suleiman Kerimov, arrested on suspicion of money laundering and tax fraud in France.

Kerimov, 51, is among Russia's wealthiest people and a member of Russia's Federation Council. His family controls Polyus, Russia's largest gold producer.

He was released on 5-million-euro bail on Wednesday, two days after being detained at an airport in Nice, but must remain in the southeastern Alpes-Maritimes region.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [told](#) reporters on a conference call that Kerimov would defend his own interests, adding that diplomatic missions in Moscow and Paris had also taken "necessary action."

There was "no doubt" efforts to help Kerimov would continue, Peskov added.

Kerimov has a diplomatic passport that theoretically grants him immunity from criminal prosecution. But the French Foreign Ministry has [said](#) it is up to the judge in the case to decide whether Kerimov will be protected by his diplomatic status.

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