

New Inquiry in Magnitsky Case

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Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev said he knew nothing about online videos accusing senior police officers linked to the death of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky of possible corruption.

But Nurgaliyev said he had ordered his ministry's internal affairs department to examine whether the officers had committed wrongdoing, forcing the department to take up a case that it had refused to consider in June.

Videos accusing police investigators Pavel Karpov and Artyom Kuznetsov of spending sums that far exceeded their modest salaries surfaced online in June and July, respectively. The Russian- and English-language videos, which became YouTube hits with several hundred thousand views, claimed that the expenses of Kuznetsov's family in 2007 and 2008 amounted to \$3 million, despite his monthly salary of \$535, and that Karpov's family had spent \$1 million.

Both families own luxury cars and expensive real estate, according to the videos sponsored by

Hermitage founder William Browder and Magnitsky's former boss, Jamison Firestone.

“I have no such information,” Nurgaliyev said when asked to comment on the videos late Tuesday, RIA-Novosti reported.

But Nurgaliyev indicated that he was aware of the corruption allegations against the two officers from other sources. “I have given an order to the internal affairs department to examine them,” he said.

Firestone said Nurgaliyev was informed about the “impunity” of the two officers during a meeting with European Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström in May.

An internal affairs department spokesman, Alexander Moskovkin, confirmed on Wednesday that investigators were looking into the case, but he gave no time frame for the inquiry, Interfax reported.

Firestone, in an e-mailed statement, said he had asked the internal affairs department to open an investigation into Karpov's and Kuznetsov's incomes in June, but the department told him that it was not authorized to conduct such a probe.

In July, prosecutor Alexander Burov rejected a similar request for an investigation from lawyer and activist Alexei Navalny, saying “no specific data on possible crimes” was provided.

Burov was actively involved in the tax case that prompted Magnitsky's arrest and always sided during court hearings with Karpov and Kuznetsov, the same people he was later assigned to investigate, Navalny said.

Magnitsky, 37, died of heart failure in pretrial detention in November. His supporters say his arrest was punishment by corrupt Interior Ministry officials whom he attempted to expose.

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