

Turf War Spills Over to Child Sex Abuse

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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The Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor General's Office, locked for months in a power struggle over an investigation into an illegal gambling ring, have found a new reason to quarrel — child abuse.

Both agencies engaged in finger-pointing Monday over a case in the Amur region town of Blagoveshchensk, where local officials for two days failed to act on a mother's complaint that her 7-year-old daughter had been sexually assaulted, prompting a mob of 200 to attempt to lynch the suspected offender.

The mother claimed local police refused to open a case because they were afraid they would not be able to win a conviction, despite her daughter's testimony.

Amur regional prosecutors said in a [statement](#) Monday that the local branch of the Investigative Committee shared the blame for not arresting the suspect promptly. They said the committee's representative in Blagoveshchensk failed to check a police report about the mother's complaint and "issued an illegal order" to free the suspect after he was brought

in for questioning.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin dismissed the statement as "a cynical attempt to lay your fault at somebody else's door," RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Police only "consulted" with the committee by telephone, without providing "materials or any details proving that they had detained a pedophile," Markin said.

Once the girl's mother addressed investigators, a case was immediately opened, he said.

The Investigative Committee also has opened cases into its investigator in Blagoveshchensk as well as local police officers and prosecutors on suspicion of failing to act on the mother's complaint. All face negligence charges, punishable with up to five years in prison, the committee [said](#) on its web site Monday.

Prosecutor General Yury Chaika said Monday that prosecutors had done nothing wrong, because the power to open cases belongs to investigators, not prosecutors. "We did all we were supposed to, within the extent of our powers, and yet they dare accuse us of something," he said, RIA-Novosti reported.

The Investigative Committee used to be a part of the Prosecutor General's Office, but the two were separated in January. A long-simmering conflict between the two agencies spilled into the open in February, when investigators accused prosecutors of protecting an illegal gambling ring in the Moscow region. The ongoing scandal, widely seen as a turf war, has already cost several prosecutors their jobs.

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