

Judges Suspected of Illegally Seizing Property

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Prosecutors have launched an inquiry into two Moscow judges suspected of organizing an unlawful seizure of property at the behest of two businessmen, Kommersant reported Thursday.

Moscow Arbitration Court Judges Irina Baranova and Yulia Beshpalova allegedly assisted businessmen Mikhail Chernov and Mikhail Balakirev in seizing a building in central Moscow by making an illegal court ruling, the newspaper said.

According to the investigation, Chernov and Baranova wanted to seize back the building at 3 Gogolevsky Bulvar, which their company, Aquamarin Limited, had sold to Equesman Holdings Limited for \$1.4 million in 2007.

To accomplish that, the businessmen purportedly obtained a falsified court resolution that allowed them to cancel the sale because it was performed by a person who did not have

a power of attorney to act on their behalf.

In November 2010, Chernov filed a suit against Equesman Holdings at the Moscow Arbitration Court to cancel the sale of property on Gogolevsky Bulvar. A year later, in November 2011, Judge Bepalova ruled in favor of the claimant, Kommersant said.

Deprived of its property, Equesman Holdings filed a complaint accusing Chernov and Baranova of fraud, which resulted in a criminal investigation. Both businessmen deny the accusations against them. The contested building has been placed under court arrest, the report said.

Investigators learned from Chernov's phone conversations that Baranova, serving as a middleman, had been coaching the claimants during the trial to give the ruling handed down by Bepalova legitimate appearance.

They also discussed payment for their services. The Moscow Court of Arbitration declined a comment pending the outcome of the inquiry, Kommersant said.

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