Kremlin aide flies home on bail

Former Kremlin aide Pavel Borodin, charged in Switzerland with money-laundering, has returned to Russia from Geneva a day after being freed on bail.

Mr Borodin was greeted by a crowd of well-wishers holding bouquets of flowers at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport.

He had made a low-key exit from Geneva on a scheduled Aeroflot flight shortly after 1300 GMT.

On Thursday, a Swiss court ordered Mr Borodin's release from custody after Russia paid bail of 5m Swiss francs ($3m).

He was detained in New York in January on an international arrest warrant issued by a Swiss judge.

He was extradited last weekend from the United States to Switzerland, and charged with money laundering and belonging to a criminal organisation.

The 54-year-old, who denies the charges, has been ordered to remain available for questioning in the two-year inquiry.

Kremlin contracts

The Swiss authorities accuse Mr Borodin of

They helped themselves to literally tens of billions of pounds worth of assets

Mr Borodin denies wrongdoing

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taking millions of dollars in bribes from two Swiss construction companies in return for contracts to renovate the Kremlin and other public buildings in Moscow while Boris Yeltsin was president.

Mr Borodin was one of Mr Yeltsin's closest confidants.

He was one of the first officials removed from the Kremlin by President Vladimir Putin last year.

At the time, the new Kremlin chief sought to distance himself from corruption scandals dogging his predecessor.

Mr Borodin is currently the secretary of the Russia-Belarus Union. Though largely ceremonial, the position guarantees him legal immunity in Russia.

Links to Yeltsin

In December, Russian prosecutors closed an investigation into whether Mr Borodin accepted bribes from two Swiss firms - Mabetex and Mercata.

They also decided not to investigate allegations linking Mr Yeltsin and his family to the affair - allegations the Yeltsin entourage deny.

The Russian news agency, Interfax, quoted the deputy chief of the special investigations department of the Russian Prosecutor-General's Office, Ruslan Tamayev, as saying there was "no case" against Mr Borodin.

However, the Geneva courts have continued to freeze bank accounts held by a Swiss construction company involved in the Kremlin scandal.

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