A former top Kremlin official arrested on arrival in the United States is to be held in jail pending a bail hearing.

Pavel Borodin, who was one of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's closest confidants, was seized at JFK airport on Wednesday night as he flew in for President-elect George W Bush's inauguration.

At a hearing in Manhattan on Thursday, a federal magistrate ordered him to be held without bail until 25 January.

Mr Borodin is wanted for alleged involvement in laundering $25m by the Swiss authorities who are seeking his extradition.

But Russian Consul General Pavel Prokofiev was quoted by Reuters news agency as saying before the hearing that Mr Borodin was prepared to go to Switzerland of his own accord.

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov summoned US Ambassador James Collins in protest at Mr Borodin's arrest and to demand his release.

Mr Ivanov told reporters that Russia was "actively undertaking steps through both Switzerland and the United States" to ensure Mr Borodin was freed.

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1124478.stm
Diplomatic 'scandal'

Mr Borodin is accused of having taken bribes from a Swiss construction firm when he was head of Kremlin property management under Mr Yeltsin and in charge of renovating the buildings.

Mr Borodin's lawyer, Boris Kuznetsov, described the arrest as illegal and said it would lead to a "major international and diplomatic scandal".

He said Mr Borodin had diplomatic status, but had travelled to America on a standard Russian passport containing his US visa.

"The Swiss prosecutors accused Borodin of money laundering. But since everything took place in Moscow, only a Russian prosecutor can prove Borodin guilty according to Russian law," he told Moscow Echo radio.

Swiss warrant

The Swiss issued a warrant for Mr Borodin's arrest in January last year.

Swiss prosecutors believe that he accepted bribes from the Lugano-based construction firm Mabetex, and charged the head of the firm with money laundering and criminal association in May last year.

Russia and Switzerland do not have an extradition treaty.

Two of Mr Yeltsin's daughters were also implicated in the scandal.

Investigation closed

A Russian investigation into the affair turned up no evidence of wrongdoing, and the case was dropped.

Mr Borodin's successor as property manager
said in June that his own audit found evidence of incompetence but not corruption on the part of his predecessor.

Current President Vladimir Putin transferred Mr Borodin to another job when he became acting president at the end of 1999.

The Russian leader has named Mr Borodin as the man responsible for bringing him to Moscow from St Petersburg in 1996 to work in the presidential administration.

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