

Former Russian Athletics Chief Fears Prosecution

Former Russian athletics chief [Valentin Balakhnichev](#) said he fears "real danger" that he could possibly face criminal charges over a bribery and [doping scandal](#) for which he denied responsibility.

The IAAF ethics commission recently banned Balakhnichev, who also served as treasurer of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) from 2011 to 2014, for life after it was alleged that he took bribes for covering up [doping by Russian athletes](#).

Balakhnichev said he had done everything he could possibly have done to prevent cheating by Russian track and field athletes. The ex-Russian athletics chief also defended his actions as President of the Russian athletics federation (ARAF) from 1991 to 2015. Balakhnichev went on to comment that he could not have held the athletes by the hand. Presently, Balakhnichev is under investigation from French financial prosecutors who are probing evidence passed on to them by the independent commission of the World Anti-Doping Agency and its chairman Dick Pound.

The former ARAF chief said he could be targeted by an international warrant. Balakhnichev remarked if things are going to keep being this way - with the documents Pound allegedly transmitted to the French authorities - then, of course, there is a real danger that this can be used against him and also remarked he is afraid but he does not see anything that could attract their interest.

Balakhnichev was accused by the World Anti-Doping Agency of having facilitated fraud and corruption within the world governing body of athletics, the IAAF. He however maintains that WADA does not have sufficient evidence to prove any of the graft allegations levied against him. Balakhnichev was among the former IAAF officials who got entangled in a corruption scandal that made Interpol issued a wanted notice for Papa Massata Diack, the son of former IAAF president, Lamine Diack and a ex-marketing consultant for the athletics' governing body. Papa Massata faces corruption and money laundering charges in France.

Recently, the Russian athletics federation selected Dmitry Shlyakhtin in an attempt to have the ban on its team lifted before the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Shlyakhtin was unanimously elected by senior sports officials to wash away allegations of widespread doping. Shlyakhtin, a former rugby and athletics coach, will head an “anti-crisis team” to implement reform and remarked his task is simple and to return Russian athletics to an international level and restore the trust of the world governing body of athletics and WADA.

Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko commented that possible Russian Olympic contenders would be tested by British anti-doping specialists three times a month in the lead-up to the Rio Games. Mutko added there are no problems with us returning because the majority of our athletes are conscientious. The sports minister also commented that our athletes are on international anti-doping registers, and to accuse us of hiding our competitors from testing is baseless.

The IAAF said in a statement that the weakness of IAAF’s governance, which has been exposed, allowed individuals at the head of the previous regime at the IAAF to delay the following of normal procedures in certain doping case.