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Klebnikov's Family Appeals for Justice

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PHOTO: Igor Tabakov / MT

Diplomats and relatives of journalist Paul Klebnikov attending a memorial service Monday, the third anniversary of his death. From left are Klebnikov's uncle Arkady Nebolsin, U.S. Ambassador William Burns, German Ambassador Walter Jurgen Schmid, and his brother Peter [Klebnikov].

Relatives of murdered U.S. journalist Paul Klebnikov expressed hope Monday that his killers would be brought to justice, following a memorial service to commemorate the third anniversary of his death.

"We've learned that a very serious search is being conducted, and that several theories are being considered," Peter Klebnikov, the journalist's brother, told reporters outside Christ the Savior Cathedral on Monday afternoon.

Senior prosecutors have assured the family that they were on the killers' trail, Klebnikov said, although he added that he did not know details of the investigation.

Paul Klebnikov, the editor of Forbes magazine's Russian edition, was gunned down while heading home from work on July 9, 2004. Many associates believe he was killed as a result of his investigative journalism, which often targeted prominent businessmen. But prosecutors have pointed the finger at Khozh-Akhmed Nukhayev, a reputed Chechen crime boss who was the subject of a critical 2003 book by Klebnikov titled "Conversation with a Barbarian."

Two Chechens, Kazbek Dukuzov and Musa Vakhayev, went on trial for Klebnikov's murder last year, accused of killing the journalist on Nukhayev's orders. After Dukuzov and Vakhayev were acquitted by a jury, prosecutors appealed to the Supreme Court, which overturned the jury's decision and ordered a new trial. The retrial was to have begun earlier this year, but it was delayed after the suspects failed to show up for a preliminary hearing in February. Vakhayev

showed up at the rescheduled hearing in March, but Dukuzov did not, and was said to be in Chechnya.

In his remarks to reporters Monday, Klebnikov was sharply critical of last year's trial, calling it a "circus."

"We cannot be happy with the first trial," he said. "There were too many problems, too many instances of misconduct. We can only hope that there will be a better trial, because what happened to date does not make us proud to be of Russian heritage." the family is descended from emigres who fled Russia after the 1917 Revolution.

At the memorial service Monday, an Orthodox priest chanted prayers and waved an incense burner as an audience of foreign dignitaries, including U.S. Ambassador William Burns and German Ambassador Walter Jurgen Schmid, held candles and looked on solemnly. Representing the Klebnikov family were his brother Peter and his uncle, Arkady Nebolsin.

Separately, the U.S. State Department released a statement Sunday encouraging the government to make resolution of the case a priority.

"The intimidation and murder of journalists is an affront to free and independent media and all who respect democratic values, and must not be tolerated," spokesman Sean McCormack said in the statement posted on the State Department's web site. "We urge Russia to take steps that protect all journalists, enable them to operate inside Russia without fear for their lives, and guarantee freedom of expression."