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Primorye Top Auditor Held In $20,000 Defrauding Case

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The head of the Audit Chamber in the Primorye region, where an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit is to take place in 2012, was detained on suspicion of defrauding a local entrepreneur of $20,000, regional investigators said Friday.

The official, Sergei Starovoitov, was detained by Federal Security Service officers after accepting the cash Thursday. Investigators did not say what he was accused of extorting the money for.

Starovoitov faces up to six years in prison if charged and convicted of large-scale fraud.

A spokeswoman for the federal Audit Chamber refused to comment Friday, saying the Primorye region chamber was not subordinate to the federal body. The Primorye region's Audit Chamber had no information on the criminal case on its web site Friday.

Primorye officials faced another fraud-related case last year, when two local departments were accused of defrauding the regional budget of more than 28 million rubles ($910,000) by

overstating expenditures for construction projects for the summit, news web site Weekjournal.ru said.

But Sergei Stepashin, head of the federal Audit Chamber, said last month that summit-related construction projects in the regional capital, Vladivostok, were not overpriced.

Nevertheless, 70 violations related to the summit's preparation were discovered by regional prosecutors in the first nine months of 2009, Weekjournal.ru said.

In a separate incident, a subcontractor doing summit-related work on the local island of Russky agreed to pay 1.5 million rubles ($49,000) of wages it owed to workers who had to go on a hunger strike to obtain the payment, Interfax reported Friday.

Prosecutors on Friday asked a court to sentence a former mayor of the Siberian city of Tomsk, Alexander Makarov, to 13 years in prison for abuse of office, large-scale bribery and fraud.

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