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# Arrests Sought in Bribes Case

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Arrest warrants have been issued for a group of government officials on suspicion of extorting bribes from companies seeking state contracts, a spokeswoman for the Moscow City Court said Monday.

Members of the group, which targeted Toshiba and other makers of medical equipment, include a senior official in the Kremlin's control directorate and former Deputy Health Minister Anna Usacheva, a spokeswoman for the court said by telephone. Five suspects were detained for questioning over the weekend, she said.

"Several Russian representatives of international medical equipment producers," were also targeted by the group, the Interior Ministry said in an e-mailed statement.

President Dmitry Medvedev criticized the government Aug. 10 for allowing graft in the state-procurement system, singling out sales of tomographic imaging machines to hospitals at prices three-times the market rate. The Kremlin's control directorate, which supervises government tenders and contracts, said Oct. 29 that "inefficiencies" in the process cost the government 1 trillion rubles ($32 billion) a year.

Officials in the group identified today contacted makers of medical equipment and threatened to put them on a government "black list" if they didn't pay a $1 million bribe, the Interior Ministry said.

Nobody at Toshiba's representative office in Moscow answered the phone when Bloomberg called seeking comment Monday.

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