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Audit Finds Ministry Misspent $26M

By Roland Oliphant

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Men readying an Emergency Situations Ministry display in Moscow in 2001. **Igor Tabakov**

The Audit Chamber has found that Emergency Situations Ministry officials improperly spent millions of dollars of federal money in the past three years, Interfax reported Friday, citing the chamber's recent report.

The chamber found that several regional authorities had misspent emergency assistance and rebuilding funds. The authorities in the Caucasus republics of Ingushetia, Chechnya and Karachayevo-Cherkessia, as well as in the east Siberian Sakha republic and southern Stavropol region, were reported to have misappropriated 700.6 million rubles ($22.7 million) between 2008 and 2010.

The chamber said the ministry's international humanitarian assistance department misspent some 122 million rubles between 2008 and 2010, Interfax reported.

The report, which was unavailable on the chamber's web site Friday afternoon, apparently said the government spent 3.54 billion rubles on humanitarian assistance in that period.

Interfax reported that copies of the report were to be sent to the authorities of the regions concerned and both houses of parliament. A spokeswoman at the chamber reached by phone Friday refused to confirm this.

The ministry's press official reached by phone Friday said she could not comment on the news because her boss was on vacation.

Last month the Audit Chamber praised the regional authorities for their handling of emergency fire funds, saying they spent 11.2 billion rubles ($363 million) that was allocated to deal with the aftermath of the massive fires during the summer “timely and effectively.”

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