

Advertising Committee Chief Fired

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Mayor Sergei Sobyenin fired the head of the Moscow advertising committee, though City Hall claimed the sacking is not related to a protracted abuse of office case against the official.

Vladimir Makarov was dismissed following the merger of his committee, which he has headed since 2004, with City Hall's media committee, a Moscow government source [told](#) RIA-Novosti on Wednesday.

Sobyenin, who has been gradually restructuring City Hall since taking office last fall, ordered the merger in December.

Investigators accused Makarov in 2009 of illegally handing out at least 131 million rubles (\$4.3 million) in discounts to private companies.

Makarov's subordinate Igor Gavrillov was arrested in July 2009 on charges of accepting a 3.25 million ruble bribe from the head of a private firm for prolonging city advertising contracts.

Makarov, who has denied wrongdoing, was also detained in August 2009 and spent almost six months in custody.

Former Mayor Yury Luzhkov and several State Duma deputies voiced their support for Makarov before a September 2009 hearing on his release, but the request was thrown out after prosecutors presented the judge an e-ticket for a flight to Israel issued in Makarov's name and dated the next day after the hearing.

Nevertheless, he was released in February 2010, soon after his subordinate Gavrilov was jailed for 3 1/2 years for extortion and after City Duma Speaker Vladimir Platonov offered to vouch for Makarov's whereabouts.

Makarov returned to work, but investigators did not drop the case. He may face up to 10 years in prison.

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