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Federal Guard Service Orders Marble Tub for $11,900

By Herbert Mosmuller

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The Federal Guard Service placed an order for a marble bathtub worth 336,000 rubles ($11,900), media reported — just as the Audit Chamber lambasted the current system of state tenders for allowing officials to waste state money.

The bathtub, to be produced by the German-based firm Burg, is intended for use by "protected individuals," a Federal Guard Service official overseeing the tender told Nezavisimaya Gazeta, without elaborating.

The order is to be delivered to the Moscow region village of Usovo, where many high-end dachas are located, according to the tender's description on Zakupki.gov.ru. The new tub is needed to replace an old one that broke, Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported Wednesday.

A spokesperson for the Federal Guard Service refused to comment on the matter Wednesday. The tender is scheduled for next week.

Since its introduction in 2006, the online system of state tenders saw many quirky orders, including requests for gold-plated furniture and luxury cars, all to be purchased for officials' use with taxpayer money.

The Audit Chamber published a report on Tuesday that evaluated the system using a set of 15 criteria developed by the World Bank.

The system scored a disappointing aggregate score of 0.4 for its efficiency on a scale where 1.0 is the norm, the report said.

Tender competition is steadily decreasing, while prices of purchases are growing faster than prices on the consumer market, the chamber said, adding that the number of "unscrupulous suppliers" has tripled since 2008.

The chamber has discovered violations worth 2 billion rubles ($71 million) in tender-related corruption, the report said. The Kremlin control department said last fall that the damages may amount to an astronomical 1 trillion rubles a year.

Anti-corruption experts Alexei Navalny and Anna Zolotaryova told The Moscow Times on Wednesday that the report is aimed to support the new legislation on state tenders.

The draft bill is lobbied by the Economic Development Ministry but criticized by the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service and whistleblowers for giving excessive privileges to officials ordering tenders.

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