

Investigators Raid Dudka Residence

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In a rare crackdown on a former governor, investigators on Tuesday searched the house of former Tula Governor Vyacheslav Dudka, who stepped down amid corruption allegations.

The search is connected with a criminal investigation into Dudka on bribery charges, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin told Interfax.

Nothing was confiscated from Dudka's house in the Tula region village of Khomyakovo, said his lawyer Vladimir Zherebenkov.

"The search is just a formality to exert psychological pressure," Zherebenkov said.

He said the search is "based on unreliable sources" and linked it to an appeal by Dudka to drop the case against him.

Dudka is under suspicion of taking a bribe of 40 million rubles (\$1.3 million) last year from the GRINN hypermarket chain, which sought to obtain a land plot in Tula for an outlet, Interfax

said.

Investigators will also search the Tula region administration building and GRINN's offices, Markin said, without elaborating or providing a date.

Investigators are also looking into the activities of two other people, GRINN's chief executive and a former subordinate of Dudka, who is believed to have acted as a middleman in the case. No charges have been filed against the former governor, but accepting a bribe is punishable with up to 15 years in prison.

Governors have regularly been accused of corruption in the past, but the allegations have rarely led to criminal investigations. But Dudka, who resigned in July without providing a reason, appears to be a victim of the prolonged political crisis in the region that also led to the downfall of Tula Mayor Alisa Tolkachyova, who was sacked in March by the United Russia-controlled city legislature.

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