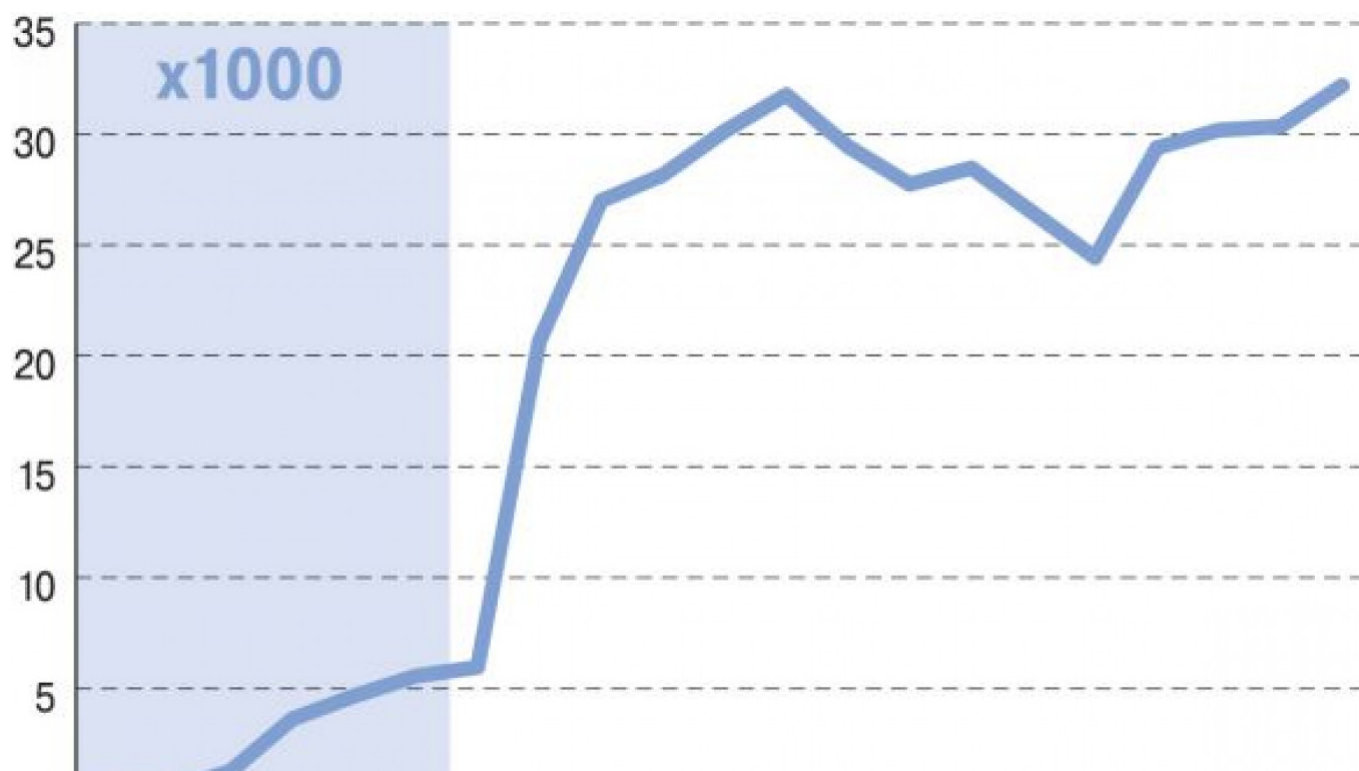


Once a Capital Offense, Ruble Exchange Reaches Anniversary

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Twenty years ago, on Jan. 1, 1992, the buying and selling of foreign currency was legalized and the ruble regained a market value.

This landmark moment in the history of the 500-year old currency was a key step in the dismantling of the Soviet economy. Owning or trading foreign currency was illegal under communism and at one point had been punishable by death.

The ruble was volatile in its early years and a major financial crisis in 1997 precipitated its collapse, forcing the Yeltsin government into devaluation. From Jan. 1, 1998, 1,000 rubles became 1 ruble.

Since 1992, the ruble-dollar exchange rate has been regulated by the Central Bank, which will use its foreign currency reserves to intervene in the case of sharp rises or falls by buying or selling rubles.

The last 10 years of high crude prices and political stability under Vladimir Putin have seen only relatively minor fluctuations in price relative to the greenback. In recent days, the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and concerns about oil price increases have boosted the Russian currency, with the ruble strengthening Tuesday to 31.66 against the dollar.

The Central Bank sold \$1.77 billion and 192 million euros (\$246 million) in December, the biggest combined total since October, the regulator said in a statement on its web site Tuesday, Bloomberg reported.

The figures were higher than in November, when the regulator sold \$1.39 billion and 131 million euros, according to the statement.

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