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Russian Ex-Cop Runs $670,000 Counterfeit Drug Factory at Home

By Peter Spinella

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Investigators have uncovered a counterfeit drug factory, along with 20 million rubles ($670,000) worth of bogus pills, at the dacha of a former first deputy head of the Moscow metro police.

The factory, whose discovery was announced Wednesday, was capable of producing more than 1.5 million counterfeit packs of pills a year, with an estimated value exceeding 300 million rubles, investigators said.

The search of the dacha, located in the town of Mikhnevo, southeast of Moscow, revealed "an assembly line for producing and packaging medicines, pill capsules, plastic packs, cartons, bags of starch, and 100,000 already fabricated counterfeit packs of Arbidol, worth more than 20 million rubles," an Interior Ministry source told BaltInfo.

The search took place in connection with a criminal case against the general director of the

Tsaryova Apteka pharmacy chain. The 44-year-old native of Tbilisi was arrested for organizing the production and sale of fake medicine, the Interior Ministry's economic crimes department said in comments carried by RIA-Novosti.

The former high-ranking cop, whose name has not been released, is a 53-year-old of Georgian heritage who left the police force in August 2011 because he was not recertified as an officer.

Investigators believe that he is part of a far-reaching Georgian organized crime ring. It was not immediately clear whether he had been arrested.

Sales of the counterfeit drugs — anti-flu pills Arbidol and Flucostat, as well as Linex, a pill for correcting microbial imbalances — were traced to pharmacies in the Moscow, Leningrad, Tver and Chelyabinsk regions, investigators said.

Testing has shown that the pills are made up mostly of starch, RIA-Novosti reported.

The fake medicine can be identified by the large number of typos in the instructions as well as the dubious quality of the packaging, a police source told BaltInfo.

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