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Senior Krasnoyarsk Official Suspended After Cocaine Report

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Zakhar Titov

Krasnoyarsk's governor suspended the region's top transportation official on Wednesday after a local television channel reported that cocaine had been found during a search of his apartment.

But the region's police department denied finding cocaine or even searching the apartment, while the official, Zakhar Titov, threatened to go to court over the allegations.

"Given the preliminary information while the facts are being determined, I have decided to suspend Zakhar Titov from office," Governor Lev Kuznetsov said. "Next I will make an executive decision based on the actual facts."

Local channel TVK Krasnoyarsk reported Tuesday evening that a fraud investigation had been opened into Titov, 38, and a related search of his apartment had turned up "traces of a small dose of cocaine." As its source, it cited an unidentified regional law enforcement official.

A spokeswoman for the region's police force, Irina Belova, denied the report and said her department was preparing to complain to the television channel that it had spread false information about the police and Titov.

"The television channel aired an unverified report," she told Interfax. "No criminal case has been opened against Titov, and his apartment was not searched."

An official in the region's transportation department also said Titov was not under investigation. "Zakhar Leonidovich believes that this is a provocation by a local media outlet, and he intends to protect his name within the framework of the law," the unidentified official told news site Life News.

A similar scandal erupted in the Sverdlovsk region when local lawmakers underwent voluntary drug tests and traces of Ecstasy were purportedly found in one urine sample, NTV television reported. Journalists were invited to the laboratory where the drug tests had been carried out, and they immediately wrote about it. But a second drug test turned out negative, and the lawmaker was acquitted.

Titov has served as Krasnoyarsk's top transportation official since April 29, 2010. Before that he worked for the construction giant Roszheldorstroi.

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