The Moscow Times
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Rogozin Says Suspects in U.S. Smuggling Case Did Not Supply Russian Military

By Ezekiel Pfeifer

October 04, 2012



Rogozin, middle, with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said Friday that a group charged in the U.S. with smuggling advanced technologies to Russia did not deliver any goods to the country's military-industrial complex, contradicting evidence presented by U.S. authorities.

"We immediately wondered who these people are, what these companies are," Rogozin, who is in charge of the military-industrial complex in the government, told Itar-Tass. "None of them delivered anything to us, at least."

A court in New York announced charges Wednesday against 11 people accused of scheming to illegally export U.S.-made microchips and other technologies to the Russian defense industry and the Federal Security Service. Eight of the accused were arrested this week.

Four of the eight suspects arrested have Russian citizenship: Alexander Fishenko, Alexander Posobilov, Viktoria Klebanova and Anastasia Dyatlova, RIA-Novosti reported.

Fishenko is accused of having run a Houston-based company called Arc Electronics Inc. that smuggled restricted high-tech components to Russia. The indictment against him says he had earned around $50 million in gross revenue since 2002.

A Houston court on Thursday briefed seven of the suspects on the charges against them, Interfax reported. They did not enter pleas. An eighth suspect who was arrested appeared in court on Wednesday.

It is expected that their cases will be moved to New York, where the indictment was filed.

The Foreign Ministry has called for the rights of the Russian citizens in the case to be protected and noted that they are not accused of spying.

A U.S. State Department official made the same point on Thursday, underscoring that the charges were related only to violations of export regulations.

"As far as I understand, this case has to do with issues of export control and businesspeople and has nothing to do with anything else," Rose Gottemoeller, under secretary of state for arms control and international security, told Interfax.

Rogozin said the arrests demonstrated the need for Russia to develop its own military production potential.

Around 60 to 70 percent of components used in the Russian defense industry are purchased abroad, a source in the industry told Interfax on Thursday.

"The latest scandal — thanks, Americans — is a flick on the nose for those who think that foreign countries will help us, that everything can be bought overseas," Rogozin said.

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