

Suspect in Defense Ministry Corruption Case Released

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Investigators released one of the suspects in a high-profile case of illegal sales of Defense Ministry property after she agreed to travel restrictions, the Investigative Committee said Monday.

Yekaterina Smetanova, the former head of the Ekspert legal support agency, who media reports have said was authorized to sell Defense Ministry assets, also was provided guards because of a "threat to [her] life and health," investigators said in a [statement](#).

Smetanova was released because she had agreed to cooperate with investigators, had confessed and had revealed the identities of two accomplices, the statement said.

Investigators also took into account her health and the facts that she has two minor-age children and has a permanent place of residence, it said.

Smetanova is suspected of large-scale fraud and commercial bribery, offenses punishable by up to 10 and seven years in prison respectively.

In late October, the Investigative Committee opened five cases on charges of fraud and abuse of office following the discovery of a scam involving the fraudulent sale of real estate and shares belonging to Oboronservis, a company that manages state military suppliers.

The criminal case has expanded to include the suspected illegal sales of 14 buildings at a loss to the state of almost \$222 million.

Several suspects, including Maxim Zakutailo, who headed a company linked to Oboronservis, and Konstantin Lapshin, deputy director general of the Slavyanka defense services holding company, remain in pretrial detention.

Another suspect in the case, Yevgenia Vasilyeva, a former head of the Defense Ministry property relations department, is under house arrest.

A few weeks after the announcement of the corruption probe into the Oboronservis fraud, President Vladimir Putin fired Anatoly Serdyukov from his post as defense minister. Serdyukov has been questioned by investigators as a witness in the case.

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