

Investigators to Look Into Ex-Olympic Head for Cost Overruns

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's prosecutor general is asking investigators to look into whether to file misuse-of-funds charges against the former deputy head of the Olympic Committee who came under fire from President Vladimir Putin for delays and cost overruns in building the ski jump complex for the Sochi Olympics.

The prosecutor's office spokeswoman, Marina Gridneva, was quoted by Russian news agencies Thursday as saying the possible charges stem from travel expenses charged to a state company formerly headed by Akhmed Bilalov that operates ski resorts in the Caucasus Mountains.

Until last spring, Bilalov also headed the company building the Olympic ski jump.

Putin singled him out for criticism in a visit to Sochi last month when he was informed that the ski jump's cost had soared from \$40 million to \$265 million and was behind schedule

to boot.

Putin called for Bilalov to be dismissed from the national Olympic committee, and Bilalov resigned from that position and his position with the resorts company in late February. News reports Thursday said he has left Russia for an unknown location.

Gridneva was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying that Bilalov and other resort company officials are suspected of wasting company money on lavish business trips, including one where Bilalov hired a helicopter to take him from the airport to his hotel in the United Arab Emirates.

Russian auditors said this week that the state company responsible for building facilities for the Sochi Olympics has systematically overstated costs by a total of 15.5 billion rubles (\$504 million).

The report by the national Audit Chamber draws new attention to concern about huge cost overruns for the games. The current price tag is estimated at about \$51 billion, which would make them the most expensive games ever.

The report, submitted to the upper house of parliament on Tuesday, says executives of the state company Olympstroy "created the conditions for an unjustified increase in the estimated cost of the sports facilities."

Russian news agencies cited a company statement saying the report gave no basis for concluding its officials baselessly raised costs.

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