

Corruption in Armed Forces Climbs Fivefold

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Anatoly Serdyukov

Corruption in the armed forces cost the state budget more than 4.4 billion rubles (\$135 million) in the first six months of the year, showing a 450 percent increase, Chief Military Prosecutor Sergei Fridinsky [told](#) a meeting of law enforcement officials Thursday.

While the overall number of crimes in the armed forces is declining, the amount of violations involving corruption have soared, showing a 5.5 time increase in the first half of 2013 compared to the same period last year.

Prosecutors managed to return more than 1.3 billion rubles (\$40 million) of the stolen funds to the state budget, however, the Prosecutor General's Office reported.

In what many will see as a worrying trend, every fifth crime in the military is related to corruption, and the number of incidents involving fraud linked to abuse of authority grew

by a half in 2013, the report said.

Fridinsky offered a vague explanation of the trend, attributing the growth of violations to the "insufficient activity of institutional financial monitoring."

A member of the Defense Ministry's public council said the violations revealed in 2013 were likely a throwback to former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov's rule between 2010 and 2012, saying they were only discovered in 2013 because "checks take a long time," he [told](#) RIA Novosti.

Fridinsky was not particularly forthcoming about the measures being taken to fight the trend, saying only that as a result of the meeting, "certain measures aimed at fighting corruption in the army and the improvement of cooperation between state agencies [were decided on]."

Alexander Kramchikhin, an expert at the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, dismissed Fridinsky's promises to fight corruption, telling The Moscow Times "there can be no real fight against corruption in a separate sphere when the whole system of state government is based on corruption."

Military General Eduard Vorobyov, who served as former first deputy commander of the ground forces in the 1990s and later worked as deputy head of the State Duma's Defense Committee, said the fight against corruption at the Defense Ministry consisted of "isolated cases" and that "systemic measures are needed."

"This [fight against corruption at the army] is done only to support the public opinion that something is being done," Vorobyov said by telephone.

However, "there is hope that if the new team undertakes systemic measures, there may be results, but not in the next couple of years," he said.

Part of the measures required would be "unheralded control" of military units, publicized results of the checks and mandatory punishment.

The financial loss of 4.4 billion rubles cited by the Prosecutor General's Office was incurred by more than 7,000 violations related to corruption, with the majority of them in the sphere of defense procurement.

Of the people involved in corruption violations in the military in the first half of the year, more than 1,100 were convicted of administrative offenses and received punishment, while 505 people became suspects in criminal cases.

One category of corruption violations this year were committed by state employees and civilians employed in the army.

A large number of offenders violated requirements for preparing assignments for state tenders, usually done in order to hire fly-by-night companies and remove competitors on formal grounds.

Violations related to the use of state real estate were a frequent practice as well, along with violations related to the catering of military officers and supply of heating and electricity

to military towns.

Corruption schemes were uncovered in the construction of military facilities when unperformed work was paid for from the state budget using fake documents.

The Defense Ministry's decision to hand the maintenance of military facilities over to specialized organizations led to the state budget losing hundreds of millions of rubles.

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