

Putin Strengthens Sanctions Against Archaeological Looters

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin has formally approved a bill imposing tougher punishments on so-called "black archeologists" found guilty of stealing archaeological artifacts, a news report said Thursday.

The law increases the maximum jail sentence for those found guilty of illegally acquiring archaeological artifacts or avoiding handing them over to the state from five to six years and raises the maximum fine applicable from 500,000 to 7 million rubles (\$15,000 to \$215,000).

Despite a number of high profile cases of illegal theft of archaeological material in recent years, convictions have been rare.

Several years ago, illegally acquired coins, helmets, swords and arrow heads appeared for sale on the internet and in April of this year, large scale looting over a number of days irreparably

damaged the Medieval settlement of Kolozho in the Pskov region, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported.

"Today Novgorod archaeologists will celebrate this event," Sergei Troyanovsky, head of the Novgorod Archaeological Research Center told RIA Novosti.

"Discussions about the necessity of this legislation and similar sanctions have been ongoing now for almost ten years and it was imperative to put an end to this lawlessness."

Despite this, the archaeologist also claimed that the law had come too late to save a considerable volume of material. "The scale of the losses is not fully acknowledged. This incidentally does not just apply to Russia, but to other countries of the former Soviet Union, in particular Ukraine."

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