

Investigators and FSB Raid Customs Service

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Investigators and security service agents on Wednesday raided the Moscow offices of the Federal Customs Service over what investigators said was a case of suspected bribery by a customs official.

It is unusual for the Investigative Committee and Federal Security Service to conduct such a raid on a federal agency, and the customs service quickly bristled in response, calling it an "unsanctioned intrusion."

An Investigative Committee representative told Interfax that the raid was conducted in connection with an inquiry into Vladimir Makarenko, the head of the criminalistics department at an investigative unit of the customs service.

According to investigators, Makarenko and unidentified customs officials deceived the director of a company called Vladpoliteks into thinking he needed to make a payment

of 80,000 rubles (\$2,417) to the customs service. They said Makarenko received the money at a Moscow cafe on July 31.

The customs service said the law enforcement agents who participated in the raid did not present proper identification or official documentation showing authorization for the searches.

"As a result, the use of such forceful methods for gaining access to the grounds of a federal organ of executive authority, in our opinion, is inadequate and irregular," the service said in a statement, according to Interfax, adding that the goal of the raid was not made clear.

"The Federal Customs Service always provides full and comprehensive assistance to investigative agencies and other security services if their actions are carried out in accordance with the norms and requirements of Russian law," the service said.

Infighting among law enforcement agencies is relatively common. The most high-profile turf war in recent years has been between the Prosecutor General's Office and the Investigative Committee, run by Alexander Bastrykin, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin.

It was unclear Wednesday whether the raid on the customs service represented the start of a new power struggle.

Customs service head Andrei Belyaninov said Wednesday's raid took place "in large part due to the poor qualifications of employees of the Moscow division of the Investigative Committee who worked on this case."

"There is no need for operations such as the one conducted today," Belyaninov said, Interfax reported.

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