

Academy of Sciences 'Doesn't Own' its Moscow Headquarters

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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RAN's current location — a prominent building known to locals as the "golden brains." **Nataliya Sadovskaya**

The Russian Academy of Sciences, or RAN, doesn't have ownership rights over its landmark building on Vorobyovy Gory and may lose the premises to a new federal scientific affairs agency, a news report said Friday.

The State Property Agency had been looking for a building to house the newly-minted Federal Agency for Scientific Organizations, created under a law on academic reforms adopted earlier this fall, and has discovered that the Academy's towering building on the hills above the Moscow River might be an appropriate venue, Kommersant reported.

Nicknamed "the brains" for its ornate geometrical gilded sculpture on top, the building has been occupied by the academy since its construction in the 1960s. But during an investigation over the past month, state property officials found that RAN has no legal claim to either

the building or its land, and that the lot is not listed in the federal property registry.

RAN's head, Vladimir Fortov, said that the property was originally built for the academy and, as such, they have a right to occupy it. He declined any knowledge of the property investigation.

But an unidentified official at the State Property Agency said that the academy had failed to register its property rights on the basis of its long-time occupancy, and now the Federal Agency for Scientific Organizations may get its chance to claim ownership rights.

The process of registering a new owner "may take years," the official added.

The Academy had applied for a title for the building this summer, but the Moscow property registration department has turned down the request, saying that the academy failed to demonstrate grounds for its claim.

Control over scientific institutions' property is the most hotly disputed part of the recent academic reforms. Some critics say that handing over research institutions' prime real estate to government agencies will subjugate the scientific community to state bureaucrats.

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