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Investigators Formally Charge Former Defense Minister With Negligence

By The Moscow Times

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Investigators have brought a formal charge of negligence against former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov on Friday, and more serious charges may follow.

"I want to clarify that this is only a preliminary charge," Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said in a statement on Friday. After a more thorough investigation, "a final charge will be brought, which will quite possibly be broadened," he said.

Serdyukov is accused of using the Defense Ministry's funds and soldiers to build a road to and develop the Zhitnoye resort in the Volga delta of the Astrakhan region and costing the government more than 56 million rubles ($1.7 million).

The former minister faced his first round of questioning as a suspect in the case earlier this week and refused to testify, invoking his right against self-incrimination. He had earlier appeared as a witness in the ongoing Oboronservis corruption case, which has resulted in a

series of major charges against his associates for embezzling billions of rubles from the state budget.

Negligence, which carries up to three months in prison upon a conviction, is widely seen as a mild charge in connection with the massive embezzlement that investigators suspect occurred during Serdyukov's tenure as defense minister.

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