The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Krasnoyarsk Governor Attacked and Robbed in French Villa

By Natalya Krainova

December 17, 2013

Kuznetsov, who was shot with a traumatic pistol in the attack, has already resumed his official duties back in Krasnoyarsk. **Sergei Porter**

Two masked burglars stole jewelry worth 200,000 euros ($275,000) from a Siberian governor's French villa over the weekend, lightly wounding the governor and his wife in the process, news reports said Tuesday.

The burglars broke into the villa in the town of Antibes on the Cote d'Azur on Saturday and sprayed tear gas on Krasnoyarsk region Governor Lev Kuznetsov and his wife. They then shot Kuznetsov in the side with an air gun and hit his wife with a baton, after which they took the jewelry, RIA Novosti reported.

An unspecified sum of money was also stolen, Kuznetsov's spokeswoman told Interfax.

The spokeswoman said Kuznetsov and his wife had recovered and that Kuznetsov had already

resumed his official duties back in Krasnoyarsk.

Kuznetsov cheerfully participated in a ceremony Tuesday marking the start of construction of a Transneft oil pipeline in the region. When asked about his health by reporters, he replied, “Well, [as] you see.”

Speaking generally about the incident in France, Kuznetsov defended his patriotism, saying: “Russia, despite how they scold her, is our dear home.”

Police in Nice are currently investigating the crime.

The news sparked a flurry of jokes from opposition leaders like Alexei Navalny, who has worked to uncover the properties of high-ranking officials both abroad and in Russia.

“9:41 a.m. Moscow time and darkness, like we live in the Arctic Circle. It is not surprising that governors can not stand it and leave for Nice,” Navalny wrote Tuesday morning on Twitter.

Fellow Twitter user Uncle Shu joked, “In response to the unfriendly step from the French side, Russia promised to rob the villa of the governor of Cote d'Azur in the Krasnoyarsk region.”

Earlier this year, President Vladimir Putin signed a law forcing many top officials to give up their foreign assets and bank accounts in order to retain their positions.

United Russia co-founder Vladimir Pekhtin left the State Duma in February after Navalny posted a report saying that he co-owned undeclared apartments in southern Florida worth more than $2 million.

According to an income declaration for 2012 posted on Kuznetsov's official website, he and his wife jointly own a 180-square-meter house and a 3,385-square-meter plot of land in France, while Kuznetsov alone also owns a 109-square-meter apartment and three garages in France. He owns various properties in Russia as well.

Kuznetsov was appointed governor of Krasnoyarsk in 2010 and has said he plans to participate in the 2015 election for his post as a member of United Russia.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/12/17/krasnoyarsk-governor-attacked-and-robbed-in-french-villa-a30555