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Former Defense Minister Relies on Amnesty to Clear Negligence Charges

By The Moscow Times

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Anatoly Serdyukov. **Denis Abramov**

Former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov started to read up on the criminal case against him but quickly lost interest, a news report said Wednesday.

The former minister began the first of the 56 volumes of his 56 million ruble ($1.7 million) case on alleged negligence only to leave after one and a half hours of work at the military Investigative Committee headquarters, Kommersant reported.

An unidentified person close to the matter had told the newspaper that it does not make sense for Serdyukov to read up on his case as an amnesty bill expected to pass the State Duma this week could exonerate the former head of Russia's armed forces.

However, Pavel Krasheninnikov, head of the Duma's Legislation Committee said Wednesday that he believed that the amnesty did not apply to Serdyukov, Interfax reported.

Prior to his departure to what he said was urgent business, the former minister told his lawyers to organize a work plan for him to examine the rest of the case.

The procedure, the lawyers said, would take him from one to three months, "depending on the intensity of the content presented by the prosecutors."

Serdyukov was charged with negligence at the end of November, 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.

Negligence carries punishments of a 120,000 rubles ($3,650), one year of community service or three months arrest. Even if convicted, the former minister is unlikely to go to jail.

The Duma will vote on the final version of the amnesty in honor of the 20th anniversary of the Russian Constitution on Wednesday.

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