

IOC Member Says One-Third of Olympic Funds Lost to Corruption

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Pocket change. **Mike Schmid**

A member of the International Olympic Committee has criticized Russia's handling of the Sochi Winter Olympics, saying they have been marred by rampant corruption and about one-third of the funds allocated to prepare for the event have been lost to embezzlement.

Corruption appeared to be an "everyday" matter in Russia, Gian-Franco Kasper, president of the International Ski Federation and a Swiss member of the IOC, said in an interview with Switzerland's SRF radio published on Wednesday.

Of the approximately \$55 billion that Russia has spent to host the Games, which are scheduled to begin on Feb. 7, about one-third — or about \$18 billion — has gone to line the pockets of officials or contractors who had access to the funds, Kasper said.

Russian opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Leonid Martynyuk gave an even higher estimate in a report they published last spring, saying that between \$25 billion and \$30 billion had been embezzled.

Kasper also accused President Vladimir Putin of staging a "PR stunt" by releasing several high-profile political prisoners like Pussy riot and Mikhail Khodorkovsky in December, echoing the wide-spread view that the move was an attempt to bolster the country's image ahead of the Games.

He also took a gloomy view of the security measures for the Olympics, which are to take place against the backdrop of recent terrorist attacks, saying that the need to deploy tens of thousands of police officers and troops to provide safety meant that the region was "not in a great mood."

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