

Embezzlement Case Opened Into Former Defense Minister's Relative

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin fired Serdyukov as defense minister in 2012.

Investigators have opened an embezzlement case against former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov's brother-in-law, accusing him of funneling state funds to friendly car dealers under fictitious contracts for renting luxury rides for ministry officials, the Investigative Committee said.

Pavel Puzikov now stands accused of large-scale fraud and embezzlement over his activities as head of the Defense Ministry's "Engineering and Technical Center" in St. Petersburg, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said Wednesday, Interfax reported.

The agency supposedly paid out 8 million rubles (\$235,000) between 2010 and 2013 to companies affiliated with Puzikov under fictitious contracts to rent luxury cars for senior ministry officials which were rarely used.

Another 4 million rubles was paid out in salaries and perks to several people who held nominal positions as a manager, secretary and nurse in the company, but "did not perform their work," Markin said.

Puzikov had previously been investigated along with Serdyukov in connection with the use of Defense Ministry soldiers for construction of a luxury resort in the Volga delta, for which Serdyukov has been charged with negligence.

The former defense minister's relative is believed to have left Russia last year to escape prosecution, and his whereabouts remain unknown, an unidentified official familiar with the case said. Investigators may issue a warrant for Puzikov's arrest and may summon Serdyukov for questioning, the unidentified official said.

President Vladimir Putin fired Serdyukov as defense minister in late 2012 amid accusations of rampant corruption in the ministry.

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