

Former Defense Minister Serdyukov Amnestied, Report Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Investigators have pardoned former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, who had been charged with criminal negligence, a news report said Thursday.

A person with knowledge of the situation told Interfax that the case against Serdyukov was dropped as part of the amnesty that freed a number of Kremlin opponents in December, including Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina and the "Arctic 30" Greenpeace activists.

The authorities have yet to comment, while Serdyukov's lawyer, Genrikh Padva, refused to confirm or deny that the charges have been scrubbed.

Serdyukov was charged in December of suspicion of using the ministry's funds and soldiers to build a road to and develop a holiday resort in the Astrakhan region belonging to his brother-in-law, Valery Puzikov, at a cost to the state of 56 million rubles (\$1.5 million).

In September, Puzikov handed the resort over to the ministry, but in January an embezzlement case was opened against him in connection with his work at an organization linked to the Defense Ministry.

Puzikov was placed on a federal wanted list last month, but Russian media reported on Wednesday that since then he has voluntarily met with investigators.

Putin fired Serdyukov in 2012 after a series of corruption cases linked to the ministry were opened.

Though Serdyukov was unlikely to face any jail time for his relatively minor negligence charge, corruption during his time as head of the Defense Ministry is thought to have resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in losses to the state budget.

The most high profile cases centered around accusations that one of the ministry's subsidiaries called Oboronservis had been selling state property at below-market prices in exchange for bribes.

Yevgenia Vasilyeva, former director of the ministry's property department, is currently under house arrest in connection with the case.

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