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Prosecutor Drops Probe into Ex-Defense Minister's Pardon

By Christopher Brennan

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A senior military prosecutor has approved the amnesty granted to former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov (right).

Russia's chief military prosecutor has accepted the legitimacy of a pardon granted to former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, a news report said Tuesday.

Having previously questioned the legality of Serdyukov's amnesty, the prosecutor ordered that an investigation be carried out by special research institutions, Kommersant reported, citing Communist State Duma deputy Valery Rashkin. The prosecutor's name was excluded from the story.

The commission reportedly concluded that the grant of amnesty was fair, though the prosecutor's office did not identify details of the institution or of the professionals that carried out the assessment, according to Kommersant.

The former minister was removed from his post by President Vladimir Putin in November 2012 amid allegations of large-scale corruption believed to have cost the state 13 billion rubles ($360 million).

Serdyukov was suspected of involvement in the allocation of ministry funds and soldiers for the construction of a road and the development of a holiday resort in the Astrakhan region belonging to Serdyukov's brother-in-law, Valery Puzikov, at a cost to the state of 56 million rubles ($1.5 million).

Ultimately, Serdyukov was charged only with negligence, and was unlikely to face jail time.

Still, dozens of criminal cases involving Defense Ministry corruption remain under investigation, Rashkin told Kommersant.

Interfax broke the story in March that Serdyukov had been pardoned.

His lawyer Genrikh Padva then said during a meeting of Moscow lawyers that the amnesty had been approved earlier in 2014 in a deal that had remained hushed in order to avoid "agitating the public," legal news agency RAPSI reported.

Padva later denied that the comments had been anything other than hypothetical.

The State Duma passed a broad amnesty in December, resulting in the release of Pussy Riot members Nadia Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, as well as the detained members of the Greenpeace Arctic Sunrise crew.

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Investigators Formally Charge Former Defense Minister With Negligence

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