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Russian Investigators Seize Assets of Pro-Kiev Ukrainian Billionaire

By The Moscow Times

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Ihor Kolomoyskyi, Ukraine's fourth-richest citizen.

Russian investigators have seized a Moscow office building belonging to a Ukrainian billionaire whose fierce anti-separatist policies have kept the eastern Ukrainian region he governs loyal to Kiev throughout the country's ongoing civil war.

The Investigative Committee — Russia's version of the FBI — said Tuesday that it had seized a building in central Moscow indirectly owned by Ukraine's fourth-richest citizen, Ihor Kolomoyskyi.

Justifying the decision, the committee's spokesman, Vladimir Markin, said "the profits from renting this building could be used by Kolomoyskyi to finance criminal activity in eastern Ukraine."

Kolomoyskyi, who according to Forbes is worth $2.1 billion, was appointed governor of his

native Dnipropetrovsk region of Ukraine soon after Kiev's street revolution expelled pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych from power.

The oligarch swiftly moved to crush nascent pro-Russian separatist activity in the region, at a time when the neighboring Donetsk and Luhansk regions were becoming mired in an ongoing civil war. Kiev has accused Russia of organizing and supplying pro-Russian fighters in eastern Ukraine.

Markin said investigators had searched the building — on Povarskaya Ulitsa, near Arbat — and found and seized documents that will be used in a legal action against Kolomoyskyi, who is accused by Russia of murder, the use of illegal force and financing punitive raids in eastern Ukraine by battalions loyal to Kiev.

To curtail this financing, the Investigative Committee said it was tracing Kolomoyskyi's assets both inside and outside Russia with the aim of seizing them.

On Monday, a hotel complex belonging to Kolomoyskyi's bank, Privatbank, was seized in Crimea. In July, a Moscow court arrested Kolomoyskyi in absentia.

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