

Ex-Construction Boss Arrested for Pilfering Millions at Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The former head of a company involved in building the vast new Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East has been arrested and charged with embezzling 1.8 billion rubles (\$43 million) from the project, news agency Interfax reported Thursday, citing the Investigative Committee.

Despite being labeled a vital national project by President Vladimir Putin in April 2012, the Vostochny Cosmodrome has been beset with delays, prompting Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, the government's military industrial point man, to take greater control over construction efforts this year.

The Investigative Committee's spokesman, Vladimir Markin, told Interfax that Yury Khrizman, a retired lieutenant general and former chief of construction firm Dalspetsstroi,

had been nabbed after a probe into problems at the cosmodrome by Russia's security service, the FSB, in coordination with the Investigative Committee and the state's financial watchdog, the Audit Chamber.

Putin in September visited the cosmodrome and pledged 50 billion rubles (\$8 billion) from next year's federal budget to ensure that the launch facility is completed in time for a first launch sometime that year.

During that visit, Putin warned that close tabs would be kept on the use of allocated funds, hinting at the possibility of criminal investigations for misappropriation.

The government has already sunk 100 billion rubles (\$16 billion) into the new launch facility, which is meant to ensure that Russia remains an independent spacefaring nation well into the future.

Currently, most of Russia's launches are conducted at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in southern Kazakhstan, the use of which has sometimes led to friction between Moscow and Astana.

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