

Head of Olympic Construction Firm Detained on Suspicion of Exploitation

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The general director of one of Russia's largest construction companies has been detained on suspicion of withholding thousands of dollars in wages owed to employees.

Investigators said in a statement Tuesday that Oleg Shishov, an Omsk-based businessman and lawmaker whose firm Mostovik was involved in the construction of facilities for February's Sochi Olympics, had failed to pay numerous employees in the first half of this year.

Shishov faces charges of withholding employees's salaries for more than two months for selfish gain, which is punishable by up to three years in prison.

Investigators say Shishov had the funds to pay his employees, but chose to keep the money for himself instead. The total amount owed to Mostovik's employees is 535,000 rubles (\$11,500) — a sum investigators say Shishov should have had no problem paying considering the 17 billion rubles the company made in the first half of this year.

Shishov's company was responsible for two major Sochi construction projects, though the investigators' statement did not mention any Olympic facilities.

There were numerous reports of labor exploitation in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics held in February. The international group Human Rights Watch published a report last fall saying that many of the workers building Olympic facilities were forced to work in miserable conditions, and that many of them had complained of unpaid wages.

In August, a case was opened against Shishov on suspicion of embezzling more than 500 million rubles from the Omsk region budget.

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