

More Arrests Made in Vostochny Cosmodrome Embezzlement Probe

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin listen to Oleg Ostapenko (L), head of the Russian Federal Space Agency, or Roscosmos, as they visit the construction site at Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Amursk Region, September 2.

A Russian court has sanctioned the arrest of two more individuals involved in the construction of the new Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East as part of an ongoing 1.8 billion ruble (\$38 million) embezzlement case, the TASS news agency reported Friday, citing a court spokesperson.

The high-profile 150 billion ruble (\$3 billion) cosmodrome project has been beset by scandal and missed deadlines. A former construction boss on the site was arrested last month as part of a major Moscow-led investigation.

On Friday, a Moscow court approved the arrest of Vladimir Ashikhmin, an accountant at Dalspetsstroj, a construction firm working at Vostochny, and Sergei Ostrovsky, the chief

engineer of 31st State Design Institute for Special Construction, another firm at the site, TASS reported.

A court spokesperson told the agency that Ashikhmin will be held until Dec. 30, while Ostrovsky will remain in custody until Jan. 17.

The government has recently moved to increase its control over Vostochny's troubled construction efforts as work has slipped behind schedule, jeopardizing the promised first launch from the facility at the end of next year.

Visiting the cosmodrome in September, President Vladimir Putin warned that the government was keeping close tabs on the allocation of project funds and threatened criminal charges for misappropriation.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed an order creating a new management directorate for the cosmodrome, answerable directly to the government.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin had been overseeing the project after Putin stripped Russia's federal space agency, Roscosmos, of its management role in September.

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