The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Millions in Cash and Jewelry Seized From Disgraced Sakhalin Governor

By Peter Spinella

March 09, 2015

Andrei Ikramov (2nd R, back), Governor of Sakhalin region Alexander Khoroshavin's aide, is escorted by Federal Security Service members inside a court building as he attends a hearing in Moscow, March 4.

Russian authorities have seized some $16.4 million in cash, hundreds of pieces of jewelry and even a $600,000 writing pen from residences of a Russian governor arrested on suspicion of having accepted a multimillion-dollar bribe, the Investigative Committee said Sunday.

Sakhalin Governor Alexander Khoroshavin, detained in his office last week for allegedly taking a $5.5 million kickback for a construction project, is in federal custody in Moscow and faces 15 years in prison.

"We are talking about a corruption in its purest sense — an official accepting a bribe in an especially large amount, $5.5 million — and this is only one instance," Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said in an online statement.

Markin said that authorities have seized 800 pieces of jewelry, such as the "regular writing pen worth 36 million rubles," from Khoroshavin's multiple residences, including three apartments in "elite buildings" in Moscow and a nearby dacha.

"An exact appraisal of the real estate should be performed. I can say that repairs and upkeep of the dacha alone cost at least 130 million rubles [$2.1 million]," the investigator said.

Khoroshavin has headed the resource-rich Sakhalin island for almost eight years, during which time it has become one of the country's wealthiest regions.

Russian officials have touted the high-profile arrest as a great step forward in rooting out endemic corruption.

Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of the upper house of Russia's parliament, told reporters on Wednesday that the case is "bold confirmation that the government is seriously determined to fight corruption."

Khoroshavin's story is one of an appointed regional boss who fell out of favor with the ruling elite during a tough financial period, said Alexei Titkov, a political analyst at the Higher School of Economics.

"What we are seeing is the struggle between various groups in the Kremlin at a time when the pie is shrinking," Titkov told The Moscow Times last week.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/09/millions-in-cash-and-jewelry-seized-from-disgraced-sakhalin-governor-a44579