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Russian Minister to 'Rip Off the Heads' of Vostochny Cosmodrome Embezzlers

By The Moscow Times

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The Vostochny Cosmodrome construction site.

Russia's giant Vostochny Cosmodrome building project faces having its electricity supply cut over unpaid bills, news reports said Wednesday, one day after a deputy prime minister overseeing the project threatened to "rip off the heads" of construction managers found guilty of corruption.

The 150 billion ruble ($2.4 billion) cosmodrome project has been mired in embezzlement allegations since work began in 2011, and spaceport's completion date has been delayed.

"I will not allow sabotage, I'll simply rip heads off," Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin was quoted by news agency Interfax as saying Tuesday after taking personal control over all financial transactions at the cosmodrome.

"Those who try to steal the people's money from the spaceport will be locked up. We will build

this cosmodrome," he added.

Three officials at the construction site were arrested last year as part of a 1.8 billion ruble ($28.8 million) embezzlement case. One of the men arrested was the head of Dalspetsstroy, the lead contractor on the cosmodrome project.

The TASS news agency on Wednesday reported that Dalspetsstroy's energy supplies could be limited by a local energy company, Amurenergosbyt, due to 21.6 million rubles ($343,000) in unpaid energy bills.

Amurenergosbyt will begin limiting supplies tomorrow until the debt is paid in full, a company spokesperson told TASS. A Dalspetsstroy official told TASS the company would pay by March 25.

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