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Crimean Official Detained on Suspicion of Large-Scale Fraud

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Council of Ministers of Crimea headquarters in Simferopol

A high-level Crimean official has been detained after allegedly embezzling more than $865,000 in assets from the recently annexed region, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Monday.

Andrei Skrynnik, the minister in charge of industrial policy on the peninsula, is suspected of helping to misappropriate more than 48 million rubles ($867,000) tied up in a Crimean-owned cooperative, RIA cited law enforcement officials as saying.

Police believe that Skrynnik worked with two Russian nationals, Vasily Khmelevsky and Igor Karpov, to try and illegally privatize the Bakhchysarai District Consumer Society.

After deceiving shareholders into holding an illegitimate meeting, Karpov was named chairman of the board of the Bakhchysarai District Consumer Society, while Khmelevsky was named a chairman with shareholder's acquisition rights, RIA reported.

With the help of Skrynnik, the two men then registered the newly restructured company in the Unified State Register of Legal Entities, thus deceiving the Crimean republic out of its ownership of the company, the report said.

Skrynnik was appointed as a regional minister in April 2014, a month after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine. He also worked for the previous Crimean administration when it answered to Kiev.

Police are continuing to investigate the case, RIA reported. Skrynnik faces up to 10 years in jail if found guilty of aiding and abetting the fraud.

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