The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Average Bribe in Russia Doubles in Rubles, Remains Steady in Dollars

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July 31, 2015



The amount of the average bribe in Russia has nearly doubled this year, reaching 208,000 rubles ($3,485 at today's rate), as the country's currency has shed value amid Western sanctions and an economic downturn, according to Interior Ministry estimates cited by pro-government Izvestia daily on Friday.

This compares to about 109,000 rubles Russians are believed to have been paying or receiving as an average bribe in 2014, though police concede that their estimates may not be completely accurate, the report said.

The increase in bribe amounts is substantially less significant in their dollar equivalent, because the Russian ruble traded at around 35 to the dollar at the start of 2014, but has slumped to around 60 to the dollar as of this week.

"Functionaries have grown used to taking bribes in dollars, or tying their amount to the Central Bank's exchange rate," a member of the Public Chamber, Dmitry Chugunov, was

quoted by Izvestia as saying.

But the chairman of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, Kirill Kabanov, said police estimates of an “average” bribe may not be worth much, Izvestia reported.

“My colleagues and I tried to make our own estimates, but then we realized that it's just impossible, because this type of crime is latent, and so all calculations would be incorrect,” he was quoted as saying.

Roman Vernega, a lawyer, argued that bribery is essentially a victimless crime, benefiting the both parties in the transaction, so neither is likely to complain to the police, Izvestia reported.

But he conceded that police informants or undercover agent who help expose corruption also allow to record the amounts of bribes that change hands, according to the report.

A corruption perception index by Transparency International ranked Russia 136th last year, just behind Nigeria.

Essentially admitting defeat, Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed into law a bill this spring slashing fines for giving and receiving bribes, after a Kremlin envoy, Garry Minkh, scoffed corruption penalties are rarely being honored anyway.

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