

Administration Chief of Russia's 'Star City' Detained on Extortion Suspicions

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The administration chief of Russia's “Star City” — the cosmonauts' training center outside Moscow — has been detained on suspicion of extortion, the Interior Ministry said.

Alexander Shchipanov — the local administration chief of the town known in Russian as Zvyozdny Gorodok, or “Star City” — is accused of extorting a bribe of 3 million rubles (\$48,500) from an entrepreneur, and was detained after the alleged first payment, 250,000 rubles, changed hands, Interior Ministry spokeswoman Yelena Alexeyeva said Sunday, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

The money was allegedly demanded in exchange for granting the entrepreneur a contract for the renovation of a shopping center, Alexeyeva was quoted as saying.

The chief inspector of the local administration's security and mobilization department was also detained during the Friday police operation, Alexeyeva said, TASS reported.

“Star City” is a closed town, with a population of only a few thousand, located just beyond Moscow's boundaries to the northeast of the capital. It is home to the Soviet Union's first

cosmonaut training site — which continues to be operated by Russia today — and adjacent housing blocks.

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