

Former St. Petersburg Official Embroiled in World Cup Corruption Scheme

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Zenit Arena Stadium in St. Petersburg (Alexander Demyanchuk / TASS)

A former St. Petersburg official has admitted to an embezzlement scheme around the construction of the city's 2018 World Cup stadium, the Associated Press reported on Wednesday.

Marat Oganessian, who served as deputy governor of St. Petersburg from 2013 to 2015, helped to arrange a payment of 50.4 million rubles (\$850,000) to a subcontractor to provide display screens for the stadium.

The stadium will host several matches, including a semifinal, at next summer's World Cup.

Oganessian admitted to helping the subcontractor win the contract even though he knew the subcontractor did not intend to use the money to provide the screens.

"He completely admitted his guilt in the acts in which he was incriminated, gave exhaustive evidence about other crimes and took steps to remedy the damage he had caused," the

Investigative Committee said in a statement.

The revelation continues a long line of corruption scandals plaguing the 69,000-seat stadium, which went over budget more than once and took almost a decade to build.

City officials admitted in 2016 that millions of dollars could be unaccounted for when the final construction costs are compiled. There were also several workers who died during the construction of the sports facility.

The stadium finally opened this year, despite a leaking roof and a faulty field that needed to be replaced.

The World Cup stadium in Samara is currently also experiencing issues with a subcontractor which received a payment of 2.6 billion rubles (\$44 million) and then promptly declared bankruptcy.

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