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Russia Launches International Manhunt for Space Contractor Reportedly Hiding in U.S.

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Roscosmos

Russian investigators have launched an international manhunt for the head of a bankrupt construction company contracted by the country's space agency who is accused of large-scale fraud and is believed to be hiding abroad.

Sergei Slastikhin, the head of Inzherniye Sistemy, was charged with fraud on Aug. 7 and placed on an international wanted list on Sept. 11, a Moscow judge said Thursday. His company held contracts for several Roscosmos Federal Space Agency sites and he reportedly had access to state secrets.

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Slastikhin has been arrested in absentia on suspicion of large-scale fraud, the RBC news website cited investigators as saying in court on Thursday.

“It’s been established that the defendant is hiding outside Russia and is currently in the U.S.,” the unnamed investigator told the Moscow court.

An unidentified source familiar with the investigation estimated damages from the suspected fraud at “hundreds of millions of rubles” to RBC.

Over the past year, federal auditors have uncovered billions of misspent funds in the Russian space industry.

Investigators have carried out a series of raids on suspicions of fraud and the leaking of secret hypersonic missile technology to the West.

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