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Putin Ally Wins $1.2Bln Contracts for Museums in Crimea, Kaliningrad, Vladivostok — Reports

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Arkady Rottenberg (Mikhail Tereschenko / TASS)

A close associate of President Vladimir Putin under Western sanctions has reportedly been awarded multi-million dollar contracts to build museums in the annexed Crimean peninsula and Russia's easternmost and westernmost cities.

The United States and European Union have levied sanctions on billionaire Arkady Rotenberg and his Stroygazmontazh construction company for roles played in the seizure of Crimea, including building a $3.6 billion dollar bridge that connects the peninsula to mainland Russia. Forbes estimates Rotenberg's net worth at $2.3 billion.

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A newly formed Russian cultural foundation has signed contracts valued 80 billion rubles

($1.2 billion) with Rotenberg's Stroygazmontazh to build museum complexes in Crimea's port city of Sevastopol as well as Russia's western Kaliningrad exclave and the Far East port city of Vladivostok, the RBC news website reported Thursday.

The foundation will allocate 30 billion rubles for the museum in Vladivostok and 25 billion rubles each for the complexes in Kaliningrad and Sevastopol, RBC reported.

An unnamed government official told the outlet that no federal money would go into the projects.

Crimean media reported this week that a sprawling museum and theater complex the size of 13 football stadiums was scheduled to be built in Sevastopol by 2023.

Primorye's regional administration named a similar deadline for the Vladivostok museum's construction during a meeting on the project last month.

The Moscow-based National Cultural Heritage foundation that awarded the contract was established in June by four Russian cultural giants: the Tretyakov Gallery, the Hermitage Museum, the Mariinsky Theater and the Bolshoi Theater.

The Kaliningrad, Sevastopol and Vladivostok museum complexes are expected to house local branches of the four cultural institutions, concert and opera halls, as well as music, dance and theater schools.

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