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# $1M of Iranian Cash Stashed in Vodka Box Stolen From Russian Foreign Ministry

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Russia had received the $1.5 million in an Absolut vodka box last November as payment for consular services. **Patrick Lauke / Flickr**

A vodka box stuffed with more than $1 million of Iranian cash was stolen from the Russian Foreign Ministry building last year, the government confirmed Thursday following media reports.

Russia had received the $1.5 million stashed in an Absolut vodka box and two bags via diplomatic pouch in November 2019 as a payment for consular services, the Ren TV broadcaster said. U.S. sanctions on Iran's banking and financial sectors effectively cut Iranian banks off from the international financial system.

A follow-up audit showed all but $400,000 going missing by mid-December 2019 and suspicion immediately falling on the employee who had allegedly stored the money in her Foreign Ministry office.

The Foreign Ministry confirmed the heist to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency Thursday, more than a year later. An unnamed spokesperson said a criminal case against an unnamed rogue accountant has been sent to court.

Ren TV said the accountant, whom it identified as the ministry's top currency and finance expert Natalya Agaltsova, had been moved from pre-trial detention to house arrest in August. Her partner is being held as a witness in the case, it added.

The suspect, Ren TV said, panicked when she claimed to have discovered the vodka box full of one-dollar bills covered by a top layer of hundred-dollar bills.

The report went on to say that the employee attempted to commit suicide after allegedly failing to make up for the discovered discrepancy with her own savings.

A lie detector test was reported to show that she knows where the stash is kept, Ren TV said.

"They say Natalya is telling everyone she expects to receive a suspended sentence," the broadcaster quoted an unnamed former colleague as saying.

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