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Russia Plunders Industrial Goods from Occupied Mariupol – Reports

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The Azovstal Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol, seen damaged by Russian shelling. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

Russian companies have been systematically looting industrial goods from factories in the occupied Ukrainian city of Mariupol since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion, according to a report by the independent news outlet Mozhem Obyasnit'.

Citing customs records, journalists estimated that Russia had plundered more than 1 billion rubles ($15 million) worth of goods — including steel, coal, pig iron and cargo containers — by September 2022.

Prior to Moscow's disputed annexation of four regions in eastern Ukraine last September, Russian customs officials continued to record goods passing through the internationally recognized border between Russia and neighboring Ukraine.

The Azovstal Iron and Steel Works alone saw 1,600 tons of metal — valued at $2 million — transported into Russia before officials stopped recording shipments in the fall, Mozhem Obyasnit' said.

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Metinvest, the international steel and mining group which owns Azovstal and the Ilyich Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol, has said Russia stole $600 million worth of steel from factories and ports in territories seized by Moscow.

Earlier this year, the BBC's Russian service learned that Valid Korchagin, a Chechen businessman with ties to the region's strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov, became co-owner of the Ilyich Iron and Steel Works.

However, in March Korchagin's name disappeared from public ownership records, after which two other Chechen businessmen were listed as the new owners.

The plundering of Mariupol industrial plants also extended to coal, with nearly 2,500 tons taken from the city between the beginning of Russia's invasion and September last year, according to the investigative report.

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Mozhem Obyasnit' said the shipment of Ukrainian coal into Russia was facilitated mainly by the Taltek Group, a coal-mining and transportation company whose president Yuri Kocherinsky lives near Russian general Sergei Surovikin in the elite Rublyovka neighborhood in Moscow's suburbs.

Taltek Group is not currently sanctioned by the West, the journalists wrote, while adding that the company pulled in a record 7.1 billion rubles ($85 million) in profits last year.

Meanwhile, the Western-sanctioned Magnitogorsk Iron & Steel Works (MMK) seized nearly $100,000 worth of freight containers in Maripoul, aided by the Belarus-based Mogilev Metallurgical Factory.

MMK's chairman Viktor Rashnikov — ranked as the 14th-wealthiest Russian by Forbes — was sanctioned by the West following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

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