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Russian Deputy Defense Minister Held in Custody on Bribery Accusations

By AFP

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A Russian deputy defense minister who was exposed in an investigation by late opposition leader Alexei Navalny's team was remanded in custody Wednesday on suspicion of taking large bribes.

The arrest of Timur Ivanov, a longtime ally of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, is the most dramatic corruption case in Russia in recent years, and comes as spending on the military has ballooned amid its offensive on Ukraine.

Ivanov, 48, oversaw construction and procurement for the Armed Forces, and was linked to Russia's high-profile rebuilding of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, occupied by Moscow's forces.

"The deputy defense minister of the Russian Federation was sent to a pre-trial detention

center," the press service for Moscow courthouses said in a statement on social media.

He faces up to 15 years in prison for bribe-taking "on a particularly large scale," it added.

Several independent Russian media outlets have alleged that Ivanov and his family acquired vast wealth through kick-backs on contracts he agreed at the ministry.

In December 2022, Navalny's team said they had obtained thousands of leaked emails from Ivanov's wife, Svetlana Maniovich, that showed a lavish lifestyle well beyond what his official salary could cover.

They said she had spent hundreds of thousands of euros on luxury cars, jewelry, clothes, parties, and renting premium property and yachts in the south of France.

Some of the transactions were routed through third parties, including Defense Ministry contractors, it alleged.

Embed:

> Басманный суд Москвы отправил на два месяца в СИЗО замминистра обороны РФ Тимура Иванова
>
> Иванова обвиняют по статье о получение взятки в особо крупном размере. Ему может грозить до 15 лет заключения.
>
> «Следствие полагает, что Иванов вступил в преступный сговор с третьими лицами,... pic.twitter.com/fcJHImrvja
>
> — SOTA (@Sota_Vision) April 24, 2024

In court on Wednesday, Ivanov, 48, stood in a glass dock for defendants in military uniform.

The court said investigators believe he was part of a "criminal conspiracy" to take a "bribe on a particularly large scale in the form of property services, during the course of contracting and subcontracting work for the Defense Ministry."

It did not provide further details.

The judge sent him to pre-trial detention until at least June 23. He will be held at the notorious Lefortovo jail in Moscow, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Campaigners, including Navalny, have long argued that corruption is endemic in President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Arrests of high-profile government figures are rare, usually the result of political infighting, analysts say.

Activists say the vast sums being poured into the Ukraine offensive have given officials new opportunities to enrich themselves through secretive procurement deals.

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