The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Who Is Timur Ivanov, the Russian Deputy Defense Minister and Shoigu Ally Arrested for Bribery?

April 24, 2024



Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov with his wife. **Social media**

Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov has been arrested in one of the highest-profile corruption cases involving the military since Russia invaded Ukraine more than two years ago.

Dubbed "one of the richest *siloviki*," 48-year-old Ivanov has been the subject of Russian media investigations into his and his family's lavish lifestyles. Ivanov is also seen as a close ally of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, sparking debate about possible purges within the Kremlin elite.

Here is what we know about Timur Ivanov and his corruption case:

Who is he?

A Moscow State University graduate who had worked in Russia's nuclear energy industry in the early 2000s, Ivanov served as Shoigu's deputy governor of the Moscow region in 2012. After Shoigu was appointed Defense Minister in late 2012, Ivanov was named CEO of the Defense Ministry's construction company Oboronstroy in 2013 until he was appointed deputy defense minister in May 2016.

According to the investigative outlet Dossier, Ivanov had gained Shoigu's favor for allegedly paying for media publications that bolster his public image.

"It is hard to find an official who has done more for Shoigu than Ivanov," The Guardian quoted an anonymous former colleague of Ivanov's as saying after the news of his arrest, characterizing the nature of their relationship.

Forbes Russia in 2018 ranked Ivanov among the wealthiest members of the country's military and law enforcement elite, estimating his family's net worth at 136.7 million rubles ($1.5 million).

Ivanov has been under U.S. and EU sanctions since 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The EU has sanctioned Ivanov as the Defense Ministry's top official in charge of the construction of military facilities.

What he was responsible for?

Ivanov oversaw construction, housing, property management, mortgages and procurement for the Armed Forces. As part of his role, Ivanov was credited with seeing through the construction of the Defense Ministry's military-themed Patriot Park, which opened in 2016, as well as the Russian Armed Forces' Main Cathedral located on the park's grounds, which was consecrated in 2020.

Ivanov was linked to Russia's high-profile reconstruction of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, which has been occupied by Russian forces after a devastating months-long siege. Activists say the vast sums being poured into the Ukraine offensive have given officials new opportunities to enrich themselves through secretive procurement deals.

Team Navalny's investigations

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

In December 2022, the investigative team of the late opposition figure Alexei Navalny 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.

Embed:

> Fantastic investigative work by @teamnavalny led to arrest of Timur Ivanov, a Russian deputy minster of defense. The thoroughly corrupt generals is a pillar of the Putin's regime; massive military spending as means of stealing money was a major reason for the war. pic.twitter.com/r3vVKAzYjt
>
> — Konstantin Sonin (@k_sonin) April 23, 2024

Some of the transactions were routed through third parties, including Defense Ministry contractors, it alleged, adding that Ivanov had divorced his wife to allow her to bypass EU sanctions.

Navalny's team and Dossier claimed that Ivanov profited from construction projects in Mariupol.

What is known about Ivanov's case?

Ivanov faces up to 15 years in prison for large-scale bribe-taking. It was not immediately clear why law enforcement would target one of the most senior officials with close ties to Shoigu, who is himself considered a close Putin ally.

"This is a serious blow to Shoigu anyway, especially ahead of [Putin's] inauguration," the independent outlet Vyorstka quoted an anonymous former Defense Ministry employee as saying. Putin was declared the winner of his fifth overall presidential term last month and is expected to form a new cabinet of ministers after his inauguration on May 7.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court said investigators believe Ivanov 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.

Ivanov denies the allegations against him.

Footage from the courtroom showed Ivanov, in military uniform, standing inside a glass defendant's cage and listening as the judge placed him in pre-trial detention until July 23.

On the day of his arrest, Ivanov was seen attending the Defense Ministry advisory board meeting where Shoigu threatened to continue striking Western-supplied weapons in Ukraine.

State-run and independent media both reported that Ivanov had been on Russian law enforcement officers' radar since at least 2018.

On Wednesday, the independent investigative news outlet IStories cited two anonymous sources as claiming that Ivanov is also suspected of state treason.

"No one would have detained him for corruption. [The Kremlin] knew about it long ago. Putin gave approval after he was persuaded about [Ivanov's alleged] state treason," one source was quoted as saying.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov urged reporters to only rely on official information while the investigation was ongoing, calling the IStories report "speculation."

Official reactions

Peskov told reporters late Tuesday that both President Vladimir Putin and Shoigu had been informed about Ivanov's arrest.

Analysts say the rare arrests of high-profile government figures are usually the result of political infighting.

Pro-war bloggers have welcomed the news of Ivanov's arrest.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/24/who-is-timur-ivanov-the-russian-deputy-defense-minister-and-shoigu-ally-arrested-for-bribery-a84941