

Ex-Deputy Defense Minister Arrested for Fraud in Russian Military Theme Park Scandal

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Former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and former Deputy Defense Minister Pavel Popov. **Mikhail Tereshchenko / TASS**

Former Deputy Defense Minister Pavel Popov was arrested on fraud charges related to a sprawling military theme park outside Moscow, federal investigators [announced](#) Thursday.

Popov is accused of misusing Patriot Park resources for personal gain, allegedly coercing the park's contract workers into performing unpaid construction work at his private property in the Moscow region between 2021 and 2024. He is also accused of diverting building materials intended for the park to his personal home.

Patriot Park, located in the town of Kubinka, around 63 kilometers (39 miles) west of Moscow, is a military-themed park and exhibition center that features interactive displays of weapons, equipment and live-firing ranges. It is also home to a grandiose Orthodox cathedral dedicated to the Russian Armed Forces.

According to the Russian Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, Popov continued to use Patriot Park's resources for the maintenance of his personal property even after the construction was complete.

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Investigators charged Popov with colluding with Patriot Park director Vyacheslav Akhmedov and senior defense ministry official Vladimir Shesternov. Both Akhmedov and Shesternov [were arrested](#) earlier this month on similar charges.

Authorities said they uncovered properties valued at 500 million rubles (\$5.4 million) linked to Popov and his family in the Moscow region and southern Russia's Krasnodar region.

Popov, a retired general, served as deputy defense minister from November 2013 until June 2024. He is the third deputy defense minister and one of several senior military officials arrested on corruption charges this year in what is seen as part of a broader crackdown on corruption within the Russian military.

The arrests began in April with the detention of former Deputy Defense Minister Timur Ivanov, who [was regarded](#) as an ally of former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. In May, Shoigu was replaced, and he now serves as the chief of Russia's Security Council.

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