

Police Arrest Former Kursk Region Governor Alexei Smirnov

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Alexei Smirnov. kpravda.ru

Former Kursk region governor Alexei Smirnov and his first deputy Alexei Dedov were arrested and charged with large-scale fraud on Wednesday.

Moscow's Meshchansky Court [ordered](#) Smirnov to be placed in pre-trial detention for two months. The court's press service published photos and videos of the ex-governor being led into a glass defendant's box where he sat as the judge read the charges aloud.

Smirnov and Dedov are [accused](#) of embezzling 1 billion rubles (\$12.17 million) from the Kursk Region Development Corporation that was meant to be used for constructing defense fortifications along the border with Ukraine, Russia's Interior Ministry said.

Law enforcement officials suspect that the two men "led the members of an organized group and, together with the management of the Kursk Region Development Corporation, organized the theft of public funds," Interior Ministry spokeswoman Irina Volk said.

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Telegram news channels with purported ties to Russian law enforcement agencies [claimed](#) that Kursk Region Development Corporation CEO Vladimir Lukin, who is facing trial in the same embezzlement case, testified against Smirnov.

Smirnov served as governor for just over 200 days before stepping down in December. President Vladimir Putin [replaced](#) him with State Duma lawmaker Alexander Khinshtein.

Several months into Smirnov's tenure, Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion into the Kursk region, displacing thousands of residents from their homes near the border with Ukraine. Some of those who managed to flee areas captured by Ukrainian forces staged protests, accusing both local officials and the Kremlin of failing to compensate them for their lost homes.

In recent weeks, Russian troops have taken back much of the Kursk region, though a small portion reportedly remains under Ukrainian control.

Smirnov appeared to fall out of favor with Putin during the early days of the incursion, when the Kremlin leader publicly [cut him off](#) mid-sentence as he attempted to brief him on Ukrainian military gains in the border region. When Smirnov resigned in December, Putin said that the former governor had not been successful in "crisis management."

Related article: [Kursk Region Construction Boss Arrested Over Border Fortification Fraud Allegations](#)

Scrutiny over the Kursk region's border defenses has intensified since Ukrainian forces launched their cross-border incursion, reportedly meeting minimal resistance.

In October, police [searched](#) the business of controversial regional lawmaker Maxim Vasilyev, who had faced accusations of border defense failures. Vasilyev publicly blamed filmmaker Nikita Mikhalkov for "sensationalizing" the situation.

Independent journalist Farida Rustamova [noted](#) Wednesday that construction work on defense fortifications in the Kursk region was completed before Smirnov took office in May, replacing former governor Roman Starovoit, who Putin appointed to head Russia's Transportation Ministry.

Before being appointed governor, Smirnov served as first vice governor of the Kursk region and chairman of the regional government.

His arrest also comes days after the mayor of the Kursk region's capital city [announced](#) that he would resign due to "family circumstances," leading to [speculation](#) that Acting Kursk region Governor Alexander Khinshtein is purging local elite networks and replacing them with his own.

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