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Former Russian National Guard Official Arrested on Bribery, Abuse of Power Charges

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Victor Strigunov. **Kirill Kukhmar / TASS**

A former top official of Russia's National Guard has been arrested on suspicion of bribery and abuse of power, the latest in a string of arrests within the powerful internal security agency, state-run media reported Monday.

Viktor Strigunov, who served as first deputy director of the National Guard until late 2023, was taken into custody by law enforcement, the TASS news agency reported.

A spokesperson for Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, confirmed to the RIA Novosti news agency that Strigunov is under investigation in connection with a major state construction project in the Kemerovo region of Siberia.

According to investigators, in 2014 Strigunov, while overseeing a multimillion-dollar state contract to build a training facility in Kemerovo, gave the order for the project to proceed

despite existing restrictions that should have halted it.

The project was ultimately never completed, resulting in losses to the state exceeding 2 billion rubles ($25 million), the Investigative Committee spokesperson said.

Strigunov also allegedly accepted over 66 million rubles ($850,000) in bribes from representatives of private companies between 2012 and 2014, investigators say. The payments were allegedly made in exchange for his protection and patronage in the execution of major government construction contracts.

Strigunov, a veteran of the force, was appointed as first deputy director of the National Guard in January 2020 after heading the National Guard's Siberian District.

Though he stepped down from his post in the autumn of 2023, he continued to serve as an adviser to the agency's director Viktor Zolotov, a longtime ally of President Vladimir Putin and former head of the presidential security service.

The case is part of a broader series of criminal cases targeting senior figures within Rosgvardia, an agency established in 2016 with a mandate that includes riot control, anti-terrorism and internal security.

At least three other senior officials have been arrested on corruption-related charges since February.

Major General Konstantin Ryabykh was arrested in connection with a large bribery case; in March, Nikolai Chepkasov, head of the Guard's Main Center for Information Technologies, faced similar allegations.

Major General Mikhail Varentsov, who led Rosgvardia's Department for Digital Development and Information Protection, was also arrested on fraud charges in Moscow in April.

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