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Bryansk Vice Governor Charged With Embezzling Border Defense Funds – TASS

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Nikolai Simonenko. **VK**

Law enforcement authorities in the western Bryansk region charged Vice Governor Nikolai Simonenko with abuse of power following searches of his home and office as part of a corruption probe into the construction of border fortifications, state media reported.

Simonenko and Yevgeny Zhura, head of the region's housing renovation fund, are accused of embezzling public funds allocated for defense infrastructure, a police source told the TASS news agency. As deputy governor overseeing administrative and organizational matters, Simonenko coordinated the work of the regional construction department.

"It has been established that Simonenko, Zhura and their accomplices, despite knowing that the contractor had not fully completed the work, abused their positions to approve the construction, causing financial damage to the regional budget," the police source was quoted as saying.

The source added that the estimated loss to the state is more than 818 million rubles ($10.45 million).

Simonenko was reportedly placed under arrest and is expected to be transferred to Moscow, where a court will determine pre-trial restrictions.

Police have yet to publicly comment on the state media report.

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Earlier on Tuesday, officers from the Interior Ministry's financial crimes and anti-corruption unit and the Federal Security Service (FSB) searched Simonenko's home and office, according to TASS.

The vice governor's arrest came amid widening investigations into alleged corruption tied to the construction of border defenses in the neighboring regions of Kursk and Belgorod.

Ukrainian forces briefly occupied parts of the Kursk region following their August 2024 incursion, despite Russia's extensive investment in border defenses. The incursion raised questions over the effectiveness and accounting of the construction projects.

Several officials in Kursk, including former Governor Alexei Smirnov, have since been charged with embezzling funds intended for the defenses. Another former governor, Roman Starovoit, was also reportedly going to face charges before he killed himself outside Moscow earlier this month.

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