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Ex-Sverdlovsk Governor Detained in Urals Utilities Corruption Case

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Oleg Chemezov. **midural.ru**

The former deputy governor of Russia's Sverdlovsk region has been detained as part of a sweeping investigation into corruption surrounding local utility companies, Interfax reported Monday, citing his lawyer.

Oleg Chemezov was detained on claims of fraud and is expected to be formally charged in the city of Yekaterinburg on Tuesday, according to lawyer Maria Kirillova.

Chemezov is reportedly among 14 individuals and 80 companies named as co-defendants in the lawsuit from the Prosecutor General's Office seeking to seize companies tied to business partners Alexei Bobrov and Artyom Bikov. Chemezov was alleged to have approved high utility rates in exchange for benefits to his relatives.

He denies the allegations.

Sverdlovsk region Governor Denis Pasler dismissed Chemezov, who had served as deputy

governor in charge of political affairs since December 2021, last Thursday.

Local media reported that the fraud case is partly based on testimony by former regional housing minister Nikolai Smirnov, who claimed to be acting under Chemezov's and others' instructions, according to local media, and confirmed by a source to business daily RBC.

Chemezov's ex-wife Irina Chemezova is under house arrest until Nov. 1 as part of a fraud case. It was not immediately clear whether these are separate or a single fraud investigation.

Related article: Urals Businessman Arrested as Prosecutors Move to Seize Utility Companies

Meanwhile, the high-profile case against businessmen Bobrov and Bikov kicked off in Yekaterinburg earlier on Monday.

Prosecutors accuse them of monopolizing electricity generation and supply, as well as household waste processing across the Urals.

Bobrov and Bikov, both of whom apparently hold Austrian citizenship, were accused of moving at least 12 billion rubles ($143.5 million) abroad through affiliated firms.

Bobrov and Bikov deny wrongdoing, while their holding Corporation STS called the allegations unfounded.

Russian police last week arrested Bobrov and senior executives of Corporation STS and its subsidiaries. Bikov, who had been linked to exiled ex-Putin aide Anatoly Chubais, is still believed to be at large.

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