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Billionaire Kustov Arrested Alongside Efko Executives and Senior Trade Official

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Valery Kustov. **ruwiki.ru**

Valery Kustov, founder and majority shareholder of major Russian agribusiness group Efko, has been arrested in Moscow in connection with a fraud investigation alongside several of the company's executives and a senior Industry and Trade Ministry official, Russian media reported Thursday.

Moscow's Meshchansky District Court ordered the arrest of Efko's director of strategic development, Vladislav Romantsev, and deputy development director Ekaterina Kustova. Both were placed in pre-trial detention on fraud charges.

In a statement, the company confirmed the arrest of several employees, naming only Romantsev.

Alla Polovchenya, who serves as deputy head of the Industry and Trade Ministry's department

of unmanned systems and robotics, was arrested alongside Romantsev and Kustova, according to media reports.

Polovchenya was placed in pre-trial detention on charges of embezzlement.

Kustov is a Forbes-listed billionaire with an estimated net worth of around $1.1 billion. His Efko group owns a number of popular consumer food brands in Russia, including the Sloboda line of mayonnaise, ketchups and sunflower oils, as well as the Altero oil brand.

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The arrests are connected to a criminal investigation into the company Transportation of the Future, which develops unmanned aerial systems, according to Kommersant and RBC.

Transportation of the Future originally launched as an internal venture backed by Efko board members before spinning off into an independent drone developer, Kommersant reported.

In May, a Belgorod region court placed Yury Kozarenko, the former head of Transportation of the Future, in pre-trial detention on fraud charges.

Kozarenko started his career at Efko in 2012 before taking charge of Transportation of the Future in 2022. President Vladimir Putin toured the company's research and manufacturing center in the city of Tolyatti in January 2025.

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