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Russian Chip Importer CEO Jailed in $1.8M Tax Evasion Case

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Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency

A Moscow court has ordered the head of one of Russia's largest importers of foreign-made microchips to be held in pre-trial detention on charges of evading nearly 150 million rubles ($1.82 million) in taxes, the Kommersant newspaper reported Wednesday.

The Chertanovsky District Court granted investigators' request on Monday to detain Igor Vinyukov, founder and CEO of Tsifron, which operates under the Cyfron Semiconductor brand.

The Repost news outlet reported that Tsifron imports foreign-made microchips, field-programmable gate arrays, microelectromechanical systems and other components into Russia despite international sanctions.

The Federal Tax Service's branch in the republic of Udmurtia found that Tsifron owed 148.5 million rubles ($1.80 million), Kommersant reported.

At the tax authority's request, the Moscow Arbitration Court barred Vinyukov from entering into transactions and froze 121.9 million rubles ($1.47 million) belonging to him.

One of Tsifron's major customers was the state-owned Gamma Scientific and Production Enterprise, a key contractor for the FSB, Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry and other government agencies.

Gamma conducts research and [what it calls] "specialized work" for state bodies, including protecting personal data, commercial and state secrets, government information systems and critical information infrastructure.

Related article: [Russia's Largest Chip Maker Posts 98% Profit Collapse]

Gamma has sought more than 300,000 rubles ($3,630) from Tsifron over missed delivery deadlines.

Aquarius, one of Russia's largest developers and manufacturers of computer equipment and IT systems, has filed a separate lawsuit against Tsifron, Kommersant said.

The company, which works with state bodies including the Central Bank, Federal Treasury and Federal Bailiffs Service, is seeking more than 2 million rubles ($24,200) for alleged unjust enrichment and almost 350,000 rubles ($4,235) in penalties over components that Tsifron failed to deliver.

Financial filings indicate that Tsifron, which was registered in July 2016, has faced a sharp deterioration in its finances as Western sanctions have tightened.

Its profit fell from more than 38 million rubles ($459,800) in 2022 to 3 million rubles ($36,300) in 2024. The company reported no profit last year.

The arrest follows a series of investigations involving Russian companies and officials connected to military procurement.

In May, law enforcement officers [searched] the Moscow offices of the Medical Technology Consortium, which had received state contracts to supply military hospitals with modern medical equipment, including a rehabilitation system for patients with injuries and amputations.

Security officers in late July [detained] Alla Polovchenya, deputy head of the Industry and Trade Ministry's department for unmanned systems and robotics, along with EFKO Group executives Yekaterina Kustova and Vladislav Romantsev.

They were [suspected] of stealing millions of rubles from a defense contract to develop unmanned aerial vehicles.

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