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Russian Police Chief Accused of Running Gang That Abducted Men for Ukraine War

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Yury Shibayev in a court hearing on Thursday. **Ivanovo regional court press service / VKontakte**

A police chief in Russia's Ivanovo region has been accused of organizing a criminal gang that kidnapped men to force them to fight in Ukraine, the local news outlet IvanovoNews reported.

A court on Thursday ordered Yury Shibayev, who heads the police department in the region's Komsomolsky district, held in pretrial detention until Jan. 2. He faces charges of kidnapping, fraud and unauthorized access to computer data.

Shibayev denied the charges and declined to testify, IvanovoNews reported.

The investigation involves 15 people and at least seven victims, the outlet reported. Investigators have yet to disclose details of Shibayev's alleged role in the scheme.

Shibayev has headed the district police department since April 2024.

The Ivanovo case follows reports of similar schemes in the Vologda and Sverdlovsk regions, where investigators say gangs forced men to sign military contracts and took payments intended for the recruits or their families.

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The exiled news outlet Vyorstka previously reported that at least six men had disappeared from villages in the Ivanovo region since fall 2024.

Some were lured with promises of paid work, while others were taken from their homes by force. They were made to sign contracts with the Defense Ministry and later turned up at a military unit in the Leningrad region, the outlet reported.

In the Vologda region, prosecutors in the city of Cherepovets said a gang took unemployed men and men with alcohol problems to another region, held them against their will and forced them to sign military contracts, according to a since-deleted report by local broadcaster Kanal 12.

The gang also allegedly coerced victims into sham marriages to collect military benefits.

A trial in a similar case opened last week in Yekaterinburg, the capital of the Sverdlovsk region. Investigators say the defendants offered men temporary housing, then threatened them into signing military contracts and took their enlistment payments.

Police said women may also have taken part in the scheme by marrying recruits to claim compensation if the men were wounded or killed.

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