

Ex-Kremlin Official Jailed in Graft Case

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A former official with the Office for Presidential Affairs was taken into custody Friday on suspicion of bribery.

Moscow's Zamoskvoretsky District Court authorized on Friday the arrest of Vladimir Korniyaka, who together with another former official from the Office for Presidential Affairs, Igor Yerashov, is suspected of extorting a \$10,000 bribe while auditing a department in a medical institution that illegally leased out some of its premises for commercial purposes, news reports said.

Korniyaka and Yerashov were responsible for auditing medical institutions registered as presidential property. Yerashov has been in custody since a bribery investigation was opened May 26. If convicted, both face up to 12 years in prison.

The case was opened shortly before a Moscow court essentially declared in June that Kremlin officials were untouchable by rejecting a lawsuit against a member of the presidential administration on the grounds that such complaints infringe on the president's immunity

from prosecution.

It is not the first time that officials of the Office of Presidential Affairs, headed by Vladimir Kozhin, have been put in the spotlight this year.

In July, President Dmitry Medvedev ordered a corruption investigation into Vladimir Leshchevsky, deputy head of construction at the Office of Presidential Affairs, after businessman Valery Morozov accused him of extorting bribes in connection with construction for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

No legal actions have been taken against Leshchevsky.

Russia is the world's most corrupt major economy, according to Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index, having slid to 154th among 178 countries, on par with Tajikistan and Kenya.

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