

Uzbeks Open Case Against Telecom Official

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Uzbekistan's general prosecutor's office has opened a criminal case against Deputy Prime Minister Akhmadully Aripov, who oversees the telecommunications sector, a source in government circles told Interfax.

Aripov is accused of exceeding his authority in connection with the licensing activity of Uzdunrobota, the Uzbek subsidiary of Mobile TeleSystems.

Earlier this month, the Uzbek authorities seized Uzdunrobota property that MTS says was assessed at about \$700 million, including funds in the company's accounts.

This spring, Uzbekistan's prosecutor and tax authorities audited Uzdunrobota and said they found misuse of funds, theft of property, illegal cash schemes and tax evasion.

Regulatory bodies initiated inspections at Uzdunrobota, which is Uzbekistan's biggest cellular

provider, in June. Uzdurobita's top managers were detained, documents were seized, and an inventory of property was made as part of the prosecutor's office's investigation.

MTS switched off its whole network in Uzbekistan on July 17 on instructions from the State Communications Inspectorate, leaving more than 9.5 million subscribers without service.

From May 30, 2002, to Oct. 27, 2009, Aripov worked as deputy prime minister and was responsible for communications and information technology. He also filled the post of general director at the Uzbek agency for communications and IT.

In October 2009, when the number of deputy prime ministers was reduced from seven to six, Aripov's responsibilities were expanded. In addition to IT and communications, he also took on issues of education, health care and social welfare and contacts with partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

At the beginning of this month, Aripov's removal from his post was announced, but no official order to that effect was published.

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