

Former Deputy Agriculture Minister Held in Fraud Case

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Interior Ministry has detained former Deputy Agriculture Minister Alexei Bazhanov in relation to the embezzlement of 1.1 billion rubles (\$34.8 million) from state-owned company Rosagroleasing.

A ministry spokesman said Wednesday that investigators would ask a court to sanction Bazhanov's arrest in the "nearest future," Interfax reported.

The announcement makes Bazhanov the latest in a string of high-ranking officials to be linked to fraud from state companies amid a government crackdown on corruption.

Money was stolen from the state agricultural leasing firm through fake contracts, according to police in Voronezh and specialist anti-fraud investigators at the Interior Ministry.

More than 20 searches have been carried out in the Voronezh region in relation to the

investigation, the Interior Ministry said, and an unspecified number of people have been questioned.

Former Agriculture Minister Yelena Skrynnik is among those who have been called for questioning. But police have said that she is not a suspect and that her current status is that of a witness in the case.

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