

Moscow Court Sanctions Arrest of Regional Governor Suspected of Bribery

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Alexander Khoroshavin

A Moscow court has rejected a request for the release on bail of Sakhalin region Governor Alexander Khoroshavin, who is suspected of accepting a \$5.6 million bribe, Russian media reported.

The court ruled late Wednesday to detain Khoroshavin for two months until April 27. Khoroshavin had asked to be placed under house arrest or be allowed to post a 5 million ruble (\$82,000) bail, the TASS news agency reported.

Khoroshavin's official residence, dacha and Moscow apartment were all searched before he was flown to the capital on Wednesday, where the Investigative Committee has opened a criminal case into large-scale bribe-taking. He faces up to to 15 years imprisonment if found guilty of the charges.

The head of the governor's secretariat, Vyacheslav Gorbachev, and gubernatorial aide Andrei Ikramov have also been detained in connection with the case, the Interfax news agency

reported Wednesday.

Khoroshavin has been governor of the Sakhalin region since 2007, when he was nominated by President Vladimir Putin and approved by local deputies.

He was criticized by the president in 2013, when he was accused by a member of the All-Russia People's Front of wasting budget funds after spending a reported 680 million rubles (\$11 million) on improving his self-image, the Kommersant business daily reported.

Putin responded by calling the wastage "the biggest blow" to Khoroshavin's rating and saying "it was impossible to think of anything more stupid," the report said.

Khoroshavin, 55, is the first governor in almost nine years to be detained while in office.

The Sakhalin region branch of the ruling United Russia party will consider excluding Khoroshavin from the party next week, Interfax reported Thursday.

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