

Former Defense Official Vasilyeva Missing From Prison Colony

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Former Defense Ministry official Yevgenia Vasilyeva

Human rights activists visiting the prison colony where former Defense Ministry official Yevgenia Vasilyeva is supposedly serving out her sentence did not find her in the camp, news website Gazeta.ru reported Tuesday.

Activists from the Public Watch Commission (PWC) of the Vladimir region visited Penal Colony #1 in Golovino where Vasilyeva is reportedly incarcerated, but did not see her there.

"We walked through all the colony: visited the quarantine and all other departments, but the prisoner was nowhere to be found," Irina Kitaeva, chairman of the regional branch of PWC told Gazeta.ru. "The colony director refused to tell us where Vasilyeva is."

Earlier in July, Russia's Federal Prison Service of Russia made an official statement to Gazeta.ru that Vasilyeva will meet with journalists only at her personal request.

In May, Vasilyeva, who worked as an aide to former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, was found guilty on eight charges related to her work at Oboronservis, a holding company that was controlled by the Defense Ministry to handle property sales. She was sentenced to five years in prison, but credited two-and-a-half years for time served under house arrest during the investigation and trial.

Vasilyeva is known for the extravagant lifestyle she has led since her arrest, appearing in pop music videos, trying her hand as a poet and putting on exhibitions of her own artwork.

Rumors that Vasilyeva is free began surfacing last month when the Russian Legal Information Agency (RAPSI) reported, citing an unknown source, that a woman resembling Vasilyeva was seen walking into VTB bank in the Patriarch Ponds area of central Moscow.

Vasilyeva's lawyer, Hasan-Ali Borokov, neither confirmed nor denied the information.

"I am not going to comment on that," Borokov told journalists.

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