

Chief of Russia's Environmental Watchdog Detained Over Bribery Suspicions

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The acting chief of Russia's environmental watchdog has been detained on suspicion of running an organized crime group that received bribes from companies in exchange for licenses to operate hazardous industrial sites, Russia's Investigative Committee said.

Police confiscated about 7 million rubles (\$114,000) during a search at the Moscow apartment of Vladimir Ivchenko, the acting chief of Rostekhnadzor, the national environmental, technological and nuclear watchdog agency, investigators said in a statement Thursday.

Ivchenko is accused of having organized the bribe-taking operation while serving as Rostekhnadzor's branch chief in the central Russian region of Ivanovo two years ago, the statement said.

The alleged crime group, comprised of more than 10 people, is accused of having collected

bribes from more than 200 companies since 2013, the statement said, adding that investigators are still trying to determine the total amount of money allegedly received in bribes.

Ivchenko's detention Wednesday followed the Oct. 11 detention of a senior Rostekhnadzor official in Ivanovo, Nikolai Mishanin, who was taken into custody after allegedly receiving a bribe of 155,000 rubles (\$2,500) from the director of a local technical testing and certification company, PromEnergoExpertiza, the Investigative Committee said.

Investigators seized approximately 1 million rubles (\$16,350) from Mishanin's apartment, and approximately \$180,000 in ruble, euro and dollar currency from the apartment of the PromEnergoExpertiza director, who is under investigation on suspicion of giving bribes, the statement said.

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