

Large Sums of Cash Found During Search of Customs Chief's Home

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Russia's Federal Customs Service chief Andrey Belyaninov **Vedomosti**

Large sums of cash were found during a search of the home of Russia's Federal Customs Service chief Andrei Belyaninov, according to reports by the Russian media on Tuesday.

Large sums of cash in several currencies were found by members of Russia's Investigative Committee at his luxurious home outside of Moscow, the Gazeta.ru news website reported, citing an unidentified source in the security services.

Investigators found \$400,000, 300,000 euros (\$330,000) and 10 million rubles (\$150,000) in the house, according to the TASS news agency.

"We are establishing the origins of this money and checking its legal status," an unidentified source familiar with the matter told TASS.

The office and home of Sergei Lobanov, a former advisor of Belyaninov, were also searched.

The raids, including on two of Belyaninov's properties, as well as his office, are linked to the

criminal investigation against St. Petersburg businessman Dmitry Mikhailchenko.

Mikhailchenko, reported to be worth 18 billion rubles (\$270 million), has been detained since March on smuggling charges. He is charged with documenting as building sealant containers of cognac believed to be worth \$30,000. The Mikhailchenko case is reportedly linked to the arrest of Deputy Culture Minister Grigory Pirumov on suspicion of corruption and theft.

Belyaninov resigned as head of the Customs Service about six months ago and a “dignified new position” has been sought for him since, according to the Dozhd television channel.

Neither the Kremlin nor the Federal Customs Service have commented on reports of Belyaninov’s resignation.

Belyaninov is the highest-ranking government official to fall under such intense scrutiny from Russia's law enforcement scrutiny in recent years. Three governors, as well as several high-profile officials have been arrested on corruption charges in the past year.

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