
Anatoly Serdyukov refuses to give testimonies



Today ex defense minister Anatoly Serdyukov with his lawyer was on time for the questioning in the Main Military Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee and presented several sheets of his explanations, where he set forth his version of selling the Defense Ministry's assets. But the former minister refused to give any evidence referring to article 51 of the RF Constitution, which gives right not to testify against oneself or close relatives.

It is the right of every person to choose their own line in the criminal proceedings. Mr. Serdyukov has chosen this way. It is perfectly legal, but puzzles investigators to say the least, as only recently the former senior officials of the Ministry have promised all possible assistance in finding out all the circumstances of the criminal activity and officials and businessmen involved in stealing the Ministry's assets. In this situation investigators may regard the Serdyukov's position as an attempt to undermine the investigation. If the former defense minister claims that he has nothing to do with the events that are now the subject of investigation, he could have answered explicit questions, which would have been quite logical. But Mr. Serdyukov and his lawyer decided that it would be easier to express their version of the events in a free form, to put it in a favorable light and not to answer uncomfortable questions. And investigators have a lot of questions as to how the decisions on selling the Ministry's assets were made and why the deals were concluded at definite prices.

Not having received answers to any of these questions the investigators are going to find out episodes of the crimes and collect evidence. We have to make a whole load of complex expert examinations and other necessary investigating operations. It is quite possible that Serdyukov's procedural status may change during the investigation.

Now there are 10 criminal cases filed in one lawsuit over illegal selling of Defense Ministry's assets by holding Oboronservis. Assets included complexes of military institutions, land in the Krasnodar territory, buildings of hotel Soyuz and Defense Ministry Retail Shop in Moscow, storehouses in Odintsovsky district, oil transshipment complex of the Northern Fleet in the Murmansk Region and others. The preliminary damaged inflicted by the deals is 4 billion rubles. At present in the case charges have been brought against Yekaterina Smetanova, Maksim Zakutaylo and Yevgenia Vasilieva. In addition three more cases against Slavyanka company that stole from the Defense Ministry funds allocated for maintenance of buildings. Within this case charges were brought against Alexander Yelkin, Andrei Lugansky and Yulia Rotanova. The preliminary damage to the state here is 400 million rubles. Besides, a number of pre-investigating checks are under way and it is quite possible that other crimes will be revealed during the investigation.

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