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## **In Omsk ex-minister of property relations remanded in custody in absentia**



The Omsk Region investigating bodies of the Russia's Investigative Committee continue investigating a criminal case over illegal alienation of lands in Kirov district of Omsk by the officials of the property relations office of Omsk city administration. The probe has found that Vadim Merenkov, Omsk Region Minister of Property Relations and Yuri Gamburg, First Deputy Governor of the Omsk Region were involved in the crime.

According to investigators, in 2008-2012, Yuri Gamburg, being the director of the property relations office of the Omsk city administration, together with first deputy director of property relations office Vadim Merenkov violated land laws and committed a number of illegal actions aimed at providing for ownership 24 pieces of land with a total area of 5.5 ha for farming at knowingly underrated price to affiliated persons and a piece of land of over 21 ha to Krona company for

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vegetable patches. The accused changed the land tenure status of the properties, which were in fact located in residential construction block. Later the lands were sold for cottage construction. As a result of illegal alienation the budgets of Omsk and the Omsk Region suffered damage of over 410 million rubles.

In addition, Merenkov while acting as director of property relations office gave away 2 more pieces of lands in the ownership of citizens in a similar way causing damage of 10 million rubles.

The investigators have issued an arrest warrant on Merenkov on charges of 9 counts of crimes under part 1, paragraph “c” of part 1 of article 286 of the RF Penal Code (exceeding official authority).

In March 2014, Merenkov got a written notice that he should have showed up in the investigator’s office so that charges could have been pressed against him. However, he failed to arrive, but went to Moscow for medical treatment. After that he escaped from the hospital and hid from the law enforcement bodies. Merenkov was put on a wanted list.

Today a court has satisfied a motion filed by investigators and ruled in absentia to take Merenkov in custody pending the trial. At present investigating and search operations are underway to find and detain him.

Gamburg has earlier been taken to custody. His appeal was not satisfied. The investigation is ongoing.

It should be noted that the criminal case was opened based on the files provided by the Omsk Region Office of the Federal Security Service.

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