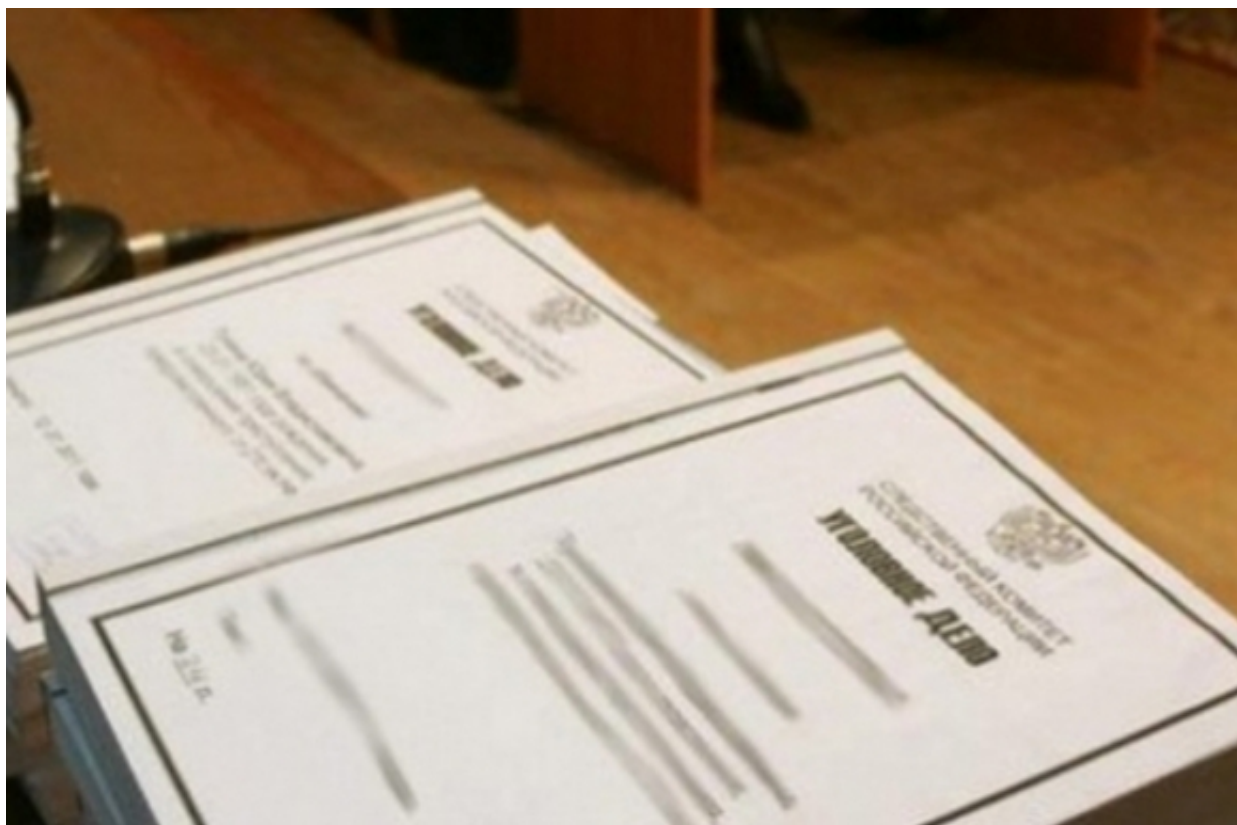


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## **In Komi Republic criminal investigation finished against 20 members of Ifa-Kozlov criminal gang set up in Vorkuta**



The Komi Republic investigating bodies of the Russia's Investigative Committee have finished investigating a criminal case against 20 members of Vorkuta Ifa-Kozlov criminal group.

In all there are 29 defendants under investigation. A court has convicted 5 defendants, who concluded cooperation deals. Another four (one of the leaders named Oleg Ifa and three active members) are wanted (court has ruled to place them in custody in absentia).

Leaders and members of the gang were charged with crimes under article 210 of the RF Penal Code (setting up a criminal group and membership in it), article 209 (establishing a stable armed group (gang) to attack people and membership in it), article 105 (murder of more than two people aggravated by taking a hostage committed by a generally dangerous way by an organized group and

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aggravated by banditry), part 3 of article 30, article 105 (attempted murder), part 3 of article 111 (deliberate infliction of grievous bodily harm committed by an organized group), article 159 (fraud committed by an organized group on a very large scale), article 163 (extortion), article 206 (taking hostage out of mercenary motives), article 222 (illegal circulation of firearms).

According to investigators, the criminal organization which consisted of former law-enforcement officers, sportsmen, veterans and others, was set up in early 1990s in the city of Vorkuta. The gang was organized by Vladimir Ifa and Yuri Kozlov. In 1997, after Vladimir's death, his brother Oleg Ifa became an active leader of the gang. At first members of the gang (no less than 20 people in all) extorted money from businessmen threatening with violence and destruction or damage to their property. By the early 2000s the number of the gang members reached 50. There was hierarchy and tough discipline, deviation from the rules was severely punished, all the members had to follow safety and secrecy rules. There was a so called "cash", where the money got from criminal activity was put.

The group was well-armed. Investigators found a lot of arms dumps with arms, ammunition, explosives and explosive devices, namely 11 Kalashnikovs of different modifications, over 40 different pistols, 6 carbines and rifles, sawn-off guns, 2 improvised explosive devices, 4 grenade launchers and flame-throwers, several thousands of cartridges of different calibers, several grenades (including antitank bombs) and antipersonnel mines. One of the caches was mined.

Only in this case the members were charged with 12 murders and attempted murders (all the crimes were committed in the past years) and 2 counts of taking hostages. Bandits got rid of their dangerous competitors - members of other criminal groups and members of their own gang, who, according to their leaders, deserved punishment.

The gang was financed by the income from racket, prostitution, illegal drug traffic, circulation of firearms, explosives and explosive devices. The gang got millions of rubles from swindling with shares of Gazprom and resale of property arrested by bailiffs service and bought at understated price. They laundered the money through trade organizations, entertainment facilities, hotels, chemists', etc.

Investigative operations (searches, seizures, identification, interviews of witnesses) were performed in the cities of Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Leningrad, Moscow, Tver, Kirov, Yaroslavl, Nizhny Novgorod, Kaluga, Saratov, Rostov, Belgorod, Kursk, Voronezh, Tambov Regions and Krasnodar Territory. At the investigators' request a court arrested money and property of the defendants worth in total over 200 million rubles. There are 340 files in the case.

Members of the investigating group worked in close cooperation with operational officers of the local office of the Federal Security Service, detention center No 1 of Main Office of the penitentiary Service of the Republic of Komi and local Ministry of Interior. Successful solving of the crimes committed by the gang was contributed by stable cooperation between investigators and operative

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services and mutual exchange of information, creative and serious attitude to the investigation, investigators' initiative. Minute work, careful collection of information, clear tasks to pull out links and defendants, who had needed information, from the system of inner vertical and horizontal relations caused the seemingly orderly system of criminal hierarchy to fall apart.

By the present time the criminal files have been sent for the indictment to be approved and then will be sent to court to be tried on the merits.

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