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## **In Novgorod Region sentence passed on members of organized criminal group**



A court has recognized the evidence gathered by Novgorod Region investigating bodies of the Russia's Investigative Committee sufficient to convict 11 members of an organized criminal group. Depending on the role of each one they were charged with crimes under part 4 of article 159 of the RF Penal Code (fraud), part 3 of article 30 – part 4 of article 159 (attempted fraud), part 3 of article 174.1 (money laundering), paragraphs “a” and “h” of part 2 of article 126 (kidnapping by a group of people in a previous concert out of mercenary motives).

The investigators have revealed that between March 2004 and July 2007, there was an organized criminal group operating in Novgorod Region and the city of Saint-Petersburg. The aim of the group was illegal compensation of VAT from the federal budget.

The members of the group registered a lot of sham firms, founders and directors of which were either themselves or figureheads. The registered firms were used as suppliers or buyers while in fact ran no business at all. By its illegal activity the group stole from the state over 9 million rubles.

In April 2006, members of the organized criminal group Yuri Gagarin and Andrey Legostayev followed the order of the leader of the group and kidnapped a resident of the city of Saint-Petersburg and took him to the town of Veliky Novgorod, where they kept him and forced to sign the documents for one of the sham firms necessary for their frauds.

The Investigations Directorate has done a lot of work to prove the circumstances of the crimes and guilt of the criminal group. The investigators conducted over 50 searches and seizures, questioned over 200 witnesses, there are 468 volumes in the criminal case. The investigation was complicated by the fact that there are a lot of defendants and the scheme was tricky involving a lot of sham firms

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and figureheads.

The court has sentenced 9 of the defendants to between 6.5 and 7 years and two months to be served in a minimum-security penal colony, the rest two defendants received between 8 and 8.5 years to be served in a special-security penal colony.

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