
Interview by Vladimir Makarov Head of Department for Control over Corruption Crimes of the Russia's Investigative Committee to Argumenty i Fakty

Vladimir Makarov of SKR: There are too many in authority who just want a plum job

2012 was rich in corruption scandals

It was discovered that officials in the Ministry of Defense, Federal Outer Space Agency, communal and housing services, agriculture were stealing milliards in most impudent way. How did this become possible and is there a way to stop it?

We talked about this with Vladimir Makarov Head of Department for Control over Corruption Crimes of the Russia's Investigative Committee (SKR).

Corruptionists work secretly

AiF: - It often happens that investigators find that officials have been stealing for many years. Doesn't Russia have bodies designed to control officials' actions and budget flows in real time or prevent corruption?

AiF file

Vladimir Makarov was born in 1979. Graduated from Moscow State Law Academy in 2001. Has been serving in prosecutor's office and investigating bodies since 2001. Mr. Makarov served as an investigator in Moscow inter-district prosecutor's office, at different positions in Moscow prosecutor's office and prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federations. Has been serving in the Investigative Committee since 2007. Mr. Makarov is an honored employee of the Investigative Committee.

V.M.: - Of course there are controlling bodies and I should say rather efficient. As far as I know Federal Finance Monitoring Service has been recently recognized as one of the world's best financial intelligence services and Federal Antimonopoly Service and Chamber of Accounts are not worse than similar services in Europe and USA. However, you should understand that the corruption crimes are latent (secret) and the more significant the sums stolen the more secretive they become. The corrupt officials do not spare either forces or money to do that. They do everything to make

transactions look legal and do not arouse suspicion of finance control bodies. Sometimes only negative consequences – like bankruptcy of the state enterprise, considerable increase of state expenses, etc. – show that all the transactions were concluded to reach personal mercenary objective. Mechanism of counter-corruption action in Russia is not static. One of the tasks in its building is creation of corruption early warning system. This is what the agreements the Investigative Committee concluded with the abovementioned controlling bodies for. These bodies forward us the information about revealed corruption crime, which allows us using a whole arsenal of procedural means of the Investigative Committee.

AiF: - The impression is that only a small group of high and medium-rank officials receive the criminal rent. It means that rank-and-file employees help them “for a salary”?

V.M.: - Many of them are just afraid to lose the job and event if they know about misdeeds of their colleagues or superiors they prefer not to stick out. But there are different examples. We have finished investigating criminal cases where whole subdivisions of state authorities acted like organized criminal groups: officials of customs in Kaliningrad and Chelyabinsk, policemen in Buryatia, Ryazan, Volgograd, Astrakhan... Over 9 months of 2012 the Investigative Committee revealed about 50 such groups! They had distribution of duties, well-tuned disguise schemes, etc. There was a criminal case over a customs post where all the employees including top officials were making money in a criminal way. There was assumption that the part of the money was going to higher levels, but unfortunately we could not prove it.

AiF: - How often do citizens signal you about crimes?

M.V.: - Last year the number of messages about crimes increased dramatically. If in the period between January and October 2011 we received about 26.6 thousand of such messages and during the same period in 2012 – 33.5 thousand. It is curious, that we all the time hear complaints from businessmen who allegedly have to give bribes. But when I offer to report the crime hardly any of them want to do that.

The problem is not in the presence of the law, but in its implementation

AiF: - What should be done to stop this horror? Maybe we again lack some laws?

V.M.: - Russian anti-corruption legislation is one of the first in the world’s top-lists and in general corresponds to main international anti-corruption Conventions. Our problem is its implementation...

At the certain moment in the history of our country it happened so that authority became filled with a lot of people whose motive was not serving their country, but having a plump job and a lot of money. But it is hard to legally make a lot of money on state service... Today the state clearly wants to get rid of such officials. And the cases investigated by the Investigative Committee are a striking example.

One of the tasks of all law enforcement agents is to provide unavoidable punishment for corrupt officials. But it's not enough, we should gradually raise a new class of officials, for whom honor and conscience mean something. People try to give bribes in most cases to those who are ready to take them. There is word of mouth spreading the information that this or that official takes bribes... Though persistence and inadequacy of some officials are striking! In Solnechnogorsky district of the Moscow Region they for already 5-6 years have been arresting officials in charge of allocation of land. New ones, who do not learn on the lessons of previous, take their places. Another one was detained in December... In the Volgograd Region, where the investigation over purchasing of CT scanners has been recently finished, vice-PM P. Krupnovm who was in charge of healthcare demanded from the oncological center a kickback of 17 million rubles.

AiF: - How former high-rank officials behave during investigation?

V.M.: - Some assist investigators, other boast their connections and hope for their intercession. When I was an investigator, one of the detainees started to call his "friends". He told the first of them that he was being searched. hardly did the others learn about that, they stopped answering their phones... Practice shows that only their accomplices really stand up for them as they are closely connected.

What officials need is real prison terms and confiscation

AiF: - What do you think about idea of broader confiscation?

V.M.: - I am sure that it is necessary to introduce confiscation as an additional punishment along with fines and jail **BY ALL MEANS**. It seems that without being thrown in jail a criminal, who has stolen a lot of money, buys the justice off. By the way, there are officials who preferred jail to huge fines. The main argument of those who oppose confiscation is possible abuses in selling the property taken away from the criminals. I think that argument doesn't stand up to criticism. This institution has worked before and I believe will work in future.

AiF: - Do you manage to return even a small part of the money they steal and send abroad?

V.M.: - Unfortunately there are almost no such returns. This mechanism is especially useless with offshore. From such island miniature countries, which each year pump through themselves hundreds of billions dollars it is very hard to get even information on accounts. Sometimes they suck in our requests like black holes. However, the situation has recently begun to change and we can get at least information. This is reassuring: Because having data on criminal bank operations we can find the entire scheme and arrest assets in Russia.

Corruption is among main problems

Russian Public Opinion Research Center have compiled new list of problems in our country.

The list is again topped by housing and communal services. When winter came 58% of the polled mentioned this problem (55% in autumn).

The next in the list are inflation and low living standards (51%), corruption and red tape (50%).

The least acute problems are observance of human rights, development of democracy, terrorism (14% each), demography (13%), delays in paying salaries (11%).

On 15 January the Russia's Investigative Committee as an independent body turned two. AiF congratulates all the staff of the agency on their professional holiday.

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