

Serbia suspends customs officers for fraud

by UPI

BELGRADE, Serbia - Serbia's customs director Monday said more than 50 of his officers were suspended on suspicion of participating in a goods smuggling ring. Predrag Petronijevic, director of the Serbian customs administration, told reporters in Belgrade an investigation into abuse of power was still under way and he could not guess how much the alleged organized crime scheme had cost taxpayers, the Serbian news agency Beta reported. The collection of customs duties and excises at Serbian borders rose 22 percent from Jan. 1 to Aug. 20 this year when compared with the same period in 2006, Petronijevic said. He said Serbia plans to modernize and reconstruct customs services at border crossings. Miodrag Djidjic, state secretary in the Serbian Finance Ministry, said a new draft law to prevent money laundering and financing terrorism should be prepared by the end of the year to keep Serbia from being expelled from international organizations fighting organized crime. Late last year, Serbian police arrested more than 30 customs officers on suspicion of being members of a merchandise smuggling ring.

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