The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Postal Workers Looted Mail, Filled Packages With Stones

July 05, 2011



The Russian Post said Tuesday that it has busted a trio of postal workers who stole the contents of expensive shipments, stuffed the parcels with junk, and returned them to the sender.

The group, which operated in the town of Bogorodsk in the Nizhny Novgorod region, stole valuables worth 1 million rubles ($35,000) from more than 20 parcels, the postal service said on its web site.

The workers mostly targeted gadgets purchased from online stores and filled the parcels with bricks, wood chips and pulp paper.

The group was masterminded by the manager of the Bogorodsk postal branch, Olga Fadina, who has admitted that she only got the job so that she could steal shipped goods, the postal service said.

Fadina and two accomplices, both her assistants at the post office, have been punished by a

court, it said, without elaborating.

The racket operated and was exposed last year, when people began to complain about missing packages, but the affair was not reported until the trial.

"I'm not surprised by this turn of events, because anyone can work at the post office now," a woman who identified herself as a former local postal worker said in comments posted at the Bogorodsk city forum Monday. The postal service is widely known for its uncompetitive salaries.

The Russian Post, which maintains 42,000 offices across the country and employs 415,500 people, plans to privatize by 2013.

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