

Child Sex Headlines Linked to Kremlin Bill

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Media pay scant attention to regular reports about child sex cases released by the Investigative Committee.

But that has changed in recent days with a flurry of headlines — including an incident where police were forced to dress a suspect in a police uniform to protect him from a crowd furious that he hadn't been arrested earlier.

An independent analyst said the media fuss does not appear to be linked to an increase in sex crimes but rather a Kremlin attempt to gain support for a [bill](#) authorizing the voluntary chemical castration of convicted sex offenders.

"The bill is controversial," Stanislav Belkovsky, a former Kremlin insider, said by telephone Friday. "That is why public opinion is being prepared for the enactment of the bill and several cases have been brought into the spotlight at once."

More than 200 residents of Blagoveshchensk, a town in the far eastern region of Amur, gathered on Thursday at the apartment building of a man accused of sexually assaulting a 7-year-old girl two days earlier, RIA-Novosti [said](#).

The 38-year-old suspect had been detained by police hours after the alleged assault occurred but was released shortly afterward.

The deputy head of the regional police, Nikolai Afanasyev, explained Friday that the suspect was released because the law bans detentions without face-to-face questioning, which could not be done due to the late hour. He also said the small girl had made conflicting statements.

The girl's mother, however, accused the police of refusing to investigate her complaint because they were worried about not winning a conviction, the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

Officers of the Investigative Committee decided to detain the suspect Thursday but could not take him away because of the enraged crowd, which demanded his blood, RIA-Novosti said. Riot police smuggled out the suspect by dressing him in a police uniform.

The suspect, whose case is now being handled by the local branch of the Investigative Committee, faces up to 20 years in prison if charged and convicted of sexually assaulting a child.

Investigators are also considering negligence charges against two Blagoveshchensk police officers, who were briefly detained but released by a court Sunday, Itar-Tass said. The charges carry a maximum sentence of four years.

In an unrelated incident, a convicted rapist released on parole earlier this year is suspected of sexually assaulting several teenage girls at knifepoint at a summer camp in the Krasnoyarsk region, RIA-Novosti [reported](#) Friday.

The suspect has been detained, and he faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted, said Olga Shamanskaya, a spokeswoman for the regional branch of the Investigative Committee.

Meanwhile, a Moscow-based Pension Fund employee detained Thursday on suspicion of co-leading a child prostitution ring has been released without being charged, RIA-Novosti reported. A Moscow police source said the case was ongoing and the suspect has denied wrongdoing.

The Kremlin's chemical castration bill is expected to be considered by the State Duma this fall.

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