

Up to a Third of Consumer Items Fake

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High-end brands of perfume are among popular targets for counterfeiters. **Maxim Stulov**

Knockoff Chinese Jin Ling cigarettes from Kaliningrad, Italian Asti wines actually made in the CIS and Bavarian car parts made in Podolsk imply a certain geographic schizophrenia for Russian consumers.

But the harsh reality is a market for counterfeit goods that some experts estimate to be worth between \$3 billion and \$6 billion per year.

Jin Ling cigarettes, inspired by an old Chinese brand, are produced especially for smuggling and have flooded Europe in the last several years. The cigarettes' packaging resembles the American brand Camel and claims to use "U.S.A. blend" tobacco. The cigarettes have been found to contain asbestos, the Daily Mail reported earlier this year.

Large quantities of the cigarettes, also produced in Ukraine and Moldova, are frequently seized in the Baltic republics. Last month at least three smugglers attempted to move more than 27,000 cartons of Jin Ling cigarettes in separate incidents across the Latvian

and Lithuanian borders, according to news reports.

Counterfeit alcohol has been a problem in Russia for decades. Earlier this year Italian sparkling wine consortium Asti D.O.C.G. introduced special stickers with a government-issued code, located on the top of each bottle to certify the authenticity of its wines. Consumers can verify the code on the consortium's web site, astidocg.it.

Police in Chukotka last week confiscated a batch of illegally manufactured booze — 915 liters of grain alcohol, 706 liters of vodka and 454 liters of cognac, according to a report posted on the Interior Ministry web site. It was the largest batch of counterfeit liquor the area has seen in several years.

Four tons of illicit alcohol was confiscated in the Krasnodar region in June, the Interior Ministry reported. An illegal sausage factory, operating out of a railroad car repair shop, was shut down in Moscow earlier this year.

Media reports last week, citing Interior Ministry investigations, said up to a third of all consumer items, including clothes, perfume, cigarettes, household chemicals and food, are counterfeit.

A fake Yves Rocher store is still in operation in the Siberian republic of Tuva, even after the company complained to the local office of the Federal Consumer Protection Service, Marker business newspaper reported last week.

Fake cosmetics stores are somewhat rarer. Usually individual brands are made illegally, with the most popular items for counterfeiting being perfumes by Christian Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Donna Karan and Nina Ricci, police spokesman Andrei Pilipchuk told Marker.

Several fraudulent grocery stores are still operating in Moscow. Activists reported imitations of popular discount chain Pyatyorochka and luxury supermarket Aliye Parusa to the Federal Consumer Protection Service, Marker reported.

The stores have not been shut down because it is difficult to prove that the counterfeiters broke the law, Consumer Protection Service chair Mikhail Anshakov told Marker.

Consumer products are not the only things being copied. Often mechanics fixing cars or planes use illegally manufactured parts, said Mikhail Blinkin, head of research for the Scientific Research Institute of Transport and Road Maintenance.

Instead of using certified parts, *leviye* — the Russian word for "left," which in slang means "fake" — parts are often used," Blinkin said.

For example, a mechanic could tell a client that he is getting a real BMW part from Bavaria, but in reality it was made in Podolsk, a town just south of Moscow.

"It happens in aviation all the time," Blinkin said.

The Federal Air Transportation Agency thinks that the problem has gone away. Counterfeiting plane parts was widespread in the 1990s, but now there are no uncertified parts used in aviation, agency spokesman Sergei Kazansky said.

"All that has been put in order, for the most part," Kazansky said.

"There are some idiots, of course, who want to save money and use 'gray' parts," he added.

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