

Vending Machine Rigged to Make Drug Sales

April 04, 2012

The  Moscow Times

Novosibirsk police have arrested two college students who are believed to have rigged a vending machine to dispense packs of Mentos containing a smokable form of synthetic cannabis.

The machine was located in a store owned by one of the suspects. The store contained only a few products — bottles of beer, ramen noodles and bags of chips — along with the vending machine, which sold packs of Mentos at several times the usual price, the Federal Drug Control Service said Wednesday.

The two men — born in 1991 and 1992 — would replace a single Mentos mint per pack with a serving of JWH-018 synthetic cannabinoid, investigators said.

The drug, which is manufactured in laboratories, is legal in some countries and is sometimes sold as "herbal incense."

It produces an effect similar to marijuana and was banned within Russia in 2010.

A search of the suspects' rented apartment discovered 533.5 grams of the drug.

A criminal case has been opened in respect to "the illegal distribution of a narcotic in an especially large amount."

The suspects, whose names were not released, face up to eight years in prison if convicted.

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