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Russian Carmakers Rebuff Nashi

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A car being built in automaker AvtoVAZ's Tolyatti factory. The words "danger zone" are written in bright yellow paint. **Andrei Makhonin**

A slew of Russian carmakers have refused to furnish cars for a large-scale car rally to celebrate Victory Day by Kremlin-backed youth organization Nashi, all save for tiny ChechenAuto, acting at the behest of Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov.

The rally, planned to begin May 5 and pass through 18 regions of the country, is timed to celebrate Russia's victory in World War II, the state's youth agency told Izvestia.

But plans for the rally are in doubt, as hopes that automakers would sponsor the event haven't panned out.

"We asked carmakers for three cars each ... it would help make them more popular," the event's press secretary, Larisa Achkanova, said, adding that the requests were sent from the deputy head of the state's youth agency..

The requests were sent to numerous companies, including VAZ, GAZ, UAZ, and AvtoVAZ. But each declined to become sponsors, except AvtoVAZ, which has yet to respond.

The companies cited several reasons for the refusal, including having their own marketing plans, the inability to participate in government programs aimed at honoring veterans and patriotic education of youth, or simply that they had too much work to do on their own. The PR manager of Sollers, owned by UAZ, told Isvestia that no detailed plans of the event were ever given to them.

In conversations off the record, company representatives told the daily that plans were simply not set for the event, making cooperation out of the question. "We had too many questions, about the program," one representative said. "In essence they just said 'give us a car' and that's it. Who works like that?" they said.

The only company to agree to work with the youth organization was ChechenAuto, which plans to produce 5,000 cars in 2012.

"We sent a letter to the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, and he sent it to ChechenAuto," Achkanova said. "The company provided us with two cars."

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