

St. Pete Investigators Detain Over 270 in Security Sweep

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ST. PETERSBURG — Police have detained 271 people, most of them from the North Caucasus and central Asia, in an investigation into involvement in "terrorist activities," authorities in St. Petersburg said Saturday.

The government is concerned that Islamist militants could become a greater threat outside the heavily Muslim North Caucasus, beset by an insurgency rooted in two separatist wars in Chechnya.

In a statement, the regional investigative committee in St. Petersburg said most detainees were from the North Caucasus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. An Egyptian and an Afghan were also detained.

The committee said they were detained "in order to check if they had legal grounds for being in St. Petersburg and their possible involvement in terrorist activities."

They were detained during an overnight raid on St. Petersburg's oldest market.

Authorities said security forces had been searching for extremist literature, weapons, drugs and documents related to a recently launched criminal case in connection with "public justification of terrorism and incitement of hatred."

The authorities did not say whether any of those detained were suspected of involvement in plotting or carrying out attacks.

Many market traders in Russian cities are from the North Caucasus or central Asia.

Local media said police had initially detained 700 people.

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