

Anti-Monopoly Watchdog Checks for Cartel of Shipping Firms

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Federal Anti-Monopoly Service is conducting an unscheduled large-scale inspection of 13 container shipping companies and their subsidiaries for signs of violations of anti-monopoly legislation.

On Friday the antitrust watchdog published a list of the companies being checked, among them the subsidiaries of the world's largest carriers, such as Maersk, Kommersant reported Monday. The checks began Feb. 11 and are scheduled to run until March 13.

The watchdog did not specify which violations it suspected but said it did not rule out the existence of coordinated actions between shipping agents.

“There is possible price fixing and market sharing between the agents based on location, clients, and the ports with which they work,” a source within the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service said in comments carried by Kommersant.

The source said the agency had “a mass of information about the market, including materials from police.”

“One of the aims of the inspections is to remind all players that in Russia this market is under careful scrutiny by government agencies,” the source said.

Unexpected inspections also took place in the shipping companies’ offices in St. Petersburg last week.

“In St. Petersburg, there was the sense that the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service's entire office that deals with cartels had arrived,” a representative of one of the companies said.

Several companies told Kommersant that the checks were likely prompted after the antitrust watchdog received information from other major market participants.

“That's one way to compete — to complain to the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service,” one company representative said.

Another source expressed suspicion over the fact that one of the biggest players on the Russian market — FESCO, a major cargo delivery service — was excluded from the inspections. Representatives at FESCO declined to comment on the matter.

The Transportation Ministry estimates that the market for container shipping is worth about \$2 billion for Russia’s exports and imports, according to Kommersant.

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