The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Post Seeks Customs Help Clearing 500 Tons of Parcels

By Irina Filatova

April 08, 2013



Russian Post demanded on Tuesday an increase in the number of customs officers in airports and its offices handling international mail after about 500 tons of parcels from abroad got stuck in Moscow.

A shortage of customs officers complicated the handling of the "increased mail flows from abroad in a 24/7 regime" and thus resulted in thousands of parcels piling up at the airports, Itar-Tass reported, citing the press service of the state run company.

Russian Post said it had repeatedly approached the Federal Customs Service asking it to expand its staff at the biggest logistics points, but to no avail. The customs service cited a presidential order to optimize the number of state employees as the reason for not adding more inspectors.

In a letter sent to the head of the Federal Customs Service Andrei Belyaninov, Russian Post

chief executive Alexander Kiselyov said they should jointly prepare proposals to President Vladimir Putin to revise the requirement to reduce the number of state officials dealing with customs registration of international deliveries.

The letter cited a complaint by German postal operator Deutsche Post over delays in customs registration of trucks carrying parcels and correspondence from Germany, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

Of the 48,000 small packages handled by Russian Post daily, custom officers only check 25,000 to 37,000 of them per day, Kommersant reported, citing an unidentified Russian Post employee. This results in three to six day delays in deliveries to consumers.

About 500 tons of international mail is stuck at Moscow airports and customs offices, the employee said. The deliveries mostly include goods purchased online from foreign retailers.

Russian Post has been frequently blamed for delays in deliveries, with one of the most recent examples involving packages with orders from online retailers based abroad failing to reach buyers here in time for this year's New Year holidays.

The government has ordered that Russian Post be moved directly under the authority of the Communications and Press Ministry, as opposed to being under an agency within that ministry, Interfax reported, citing a government order published on Tuesday.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/04/08/russian-post-seeks-customs-help-clearing-500-tons-of-parcels-a23104