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Russia Exits Customs Convention

By The Moscow Times

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Russia will no longer recognize a UN convention that established an international customs transit system aimed at speeding up the movement of goods from Aug. 14, the Federal Customs Service has announced, raising the specter of new import hassles at customs.

Customs officials have not explained the rationale behind the decision, leaving shippers baffled.

“No one knows what motivated Russia to unilaterally make this unreasonable decision,” said Marek Retelski, a senior official with the Geneva-based International Road Transport Union, which represents the global road transport industry.

Retelski oversees the organization’s TIR department, named after the TIR Convention concluded in 1975 under the auspices of the United Nations.

TIR provides for simplified customs procedures by allowing goods to be sealed in the country of origin and to only pass through customs again in the country of destination. In transit

countries customs officials are provided with a document from a booklet that entitles the transit country to customs duties.

“The decision will hit importers during the high season, September to October,” said Anton Guskov of the Association of Trading Companies and Manufacturers of Consumer Electronic and Computer Equipment. “Prices will rise, and some items will be delayed.”

In a statement announcing the decision, the customs service wrote that the Association of International Road Carriers, or ASMAP, had failed to meet its obligations to pay promised customs duties.

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