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Policeman Detained as Raids Continue

By Natalya Krainova

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Moscow investigators Tuesday detained a deputy district police head on suspicion of extorting bribes from a businessman at Matveyevsky Market, where a brutal beating of a police officer by two sellers on July 27 sparked nationwide inspections and detentions and thrust both corruption and illegal migration into the spotlight.

The attack triggered raids throughout Russia that resulted in so many detentions a "tent camp" had to be set up to accommodate some migrants. And there may be more, as the inspections continued on Tuesday, with police detaining about 40 people in Moscow, 190 illegal migrants in the Moscow region and about 300 migrants in St. Petersburg, among other raids in other cities.

Yet, while the issue of illegal immigration has taken center stage after the violent incident, it seems corruption played an equally significant role.

Investigators detained major Stanislav Solovyov, deputy head of Moscow's Ochakovo-Matveyevskoye police precinct, on suspicion of extorting bribes for a total of at least 180,000

rubles ($5,470) from an unlicensed businessman at Matveyevsky Market last year, the Investigative Committee said on its website Tuesday.

Apart from giving Solovyov money, the businessman is believed to have also renovated Solovyov's office and paid for repairs on the cars of the policeman's acquaintances, all at a total cost of at least 180,000 rubles ($5,470).

Solovyov's crime was uncovered as part of a wider probe opened on negligence charges against three police officers from the same precinct for their failure to prevent the beating of police officer Anton Kudryashov by two Matveyevsky Market vendors. Kudryashov had been trying to detain the sellers' relative on suspicion of raping a 15-year-old girl.

The suspects in that attack — Khalimat Rasulova and Magomed Rasulov, as well as the rape suspect Magomed Magomedov — are natives of Russia's North Caucasus republic of Dagestan. They are currently all in police custody, and Magomedov has confessed guilt in the rape.

The Ochakovo-Matveyevskoye police precinct's acting head, Alexei Pravkin, and his subordinates Vladimir Cherezov and Yury Lunkov have been detained on charges of negligence in connection with the attack.

Meanwhile, police detained about 40 people at Matveyevsky Market on Tuesday, nationalist website Russkaya Planeta reported, citing local sellers.

It was not immediately clear whether any of them had violated immigration laws, but the market's director, Alexander Remennik, told RSN radio on July 31 that there were no foreign workers at his market.

In the Moscow region Tuesday, police detained 190 illegal migrants at a former poultry farm and, separately, at an acting sanatorium, both facilities located in the Solnechnogorsk district, about 50 kilometers northwest of Moscow, Moscow district police said.

In St. Petersburg, police and migration officials detained about 300 migrants on the territory of a vegetable warehouse, Interfax reported, citing the press office of regional migration officials.

Police and migration officials also raided markets in the city of Vologda in the northwest of Russia, inspecting more than 80 people, regional news websites reported.

In the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, police detained 387 CIS migrants at a territory adjacent to a local market, a local news website reported.

It is unclear how many of those detained will be deported, and also how long they will remain in limbo during the deportation process.

But according to Aslambek Paskachev, president of the Moscow Tax Institute, the fight against illegal migration may benefit ordinary Russians, as it benefits the economy by removing migrants who do not pay taxes.

Yet, the situation is two-sided, Paskachev said, since Russia will also need more foreign

migrant workers in the future because of its own dropping population.

“It may make sense to announce an amnesty for illegal migrants,” Paskachev said by telephone.

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