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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

New Gun Transport Laws Proposed to Attract Hunting Tourists

By The Moscow Times

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In a bid to boost tourism, a proposal has been tabled to relax laws on importing firearms for sport.

Aiming to lure tourists to Russia for hunting trips, the Interior Ministry has proposed new legislation that could make it easier to temporarily import sporting firearms and transport them within the country.

The amendments would allow foreign citizens to carry firearms across the Russian border without certification if the purpose of their visit is to hunt or participate in shooting related events, according to a draft posted Monday on the unified government portal.

Once within the country, tourists would have similar responsibilities to those of Russian gun-owners, including ensuring the safe handling and storage of their weapons.

The individual or organization that invited the tourist would be required to inform law enforcement of their arrival and of the location of the event or hunt within 24 hours.

Russia has taken steps in recent years to improve its image as a tourist destination, loosening visa regulations for numerous countries and signing infrastructure development deals with neighboring governments. However, relaxing firearm import and transport procedures to attract visitors to Russia, a country with strict gun laws, is unprecedented.

If the government approves the amendments, "the proposed legal innovations will encourage the development of hunting tourism in Russia and its appeal for foreign tourists," the authors wrote.

In an effort to develop shooting sports in Russia, the bill would also allow accredited Russian shooting sports associations to provide weapons and cartridges to national sports teams, sports organizations and applicable educational organizations for temporary use.

Simplified procedures would also be put in place for transportation of sporting firearms by organizations that promote shooting sports and for transportation to and from shooting related expositions and cultural events.

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