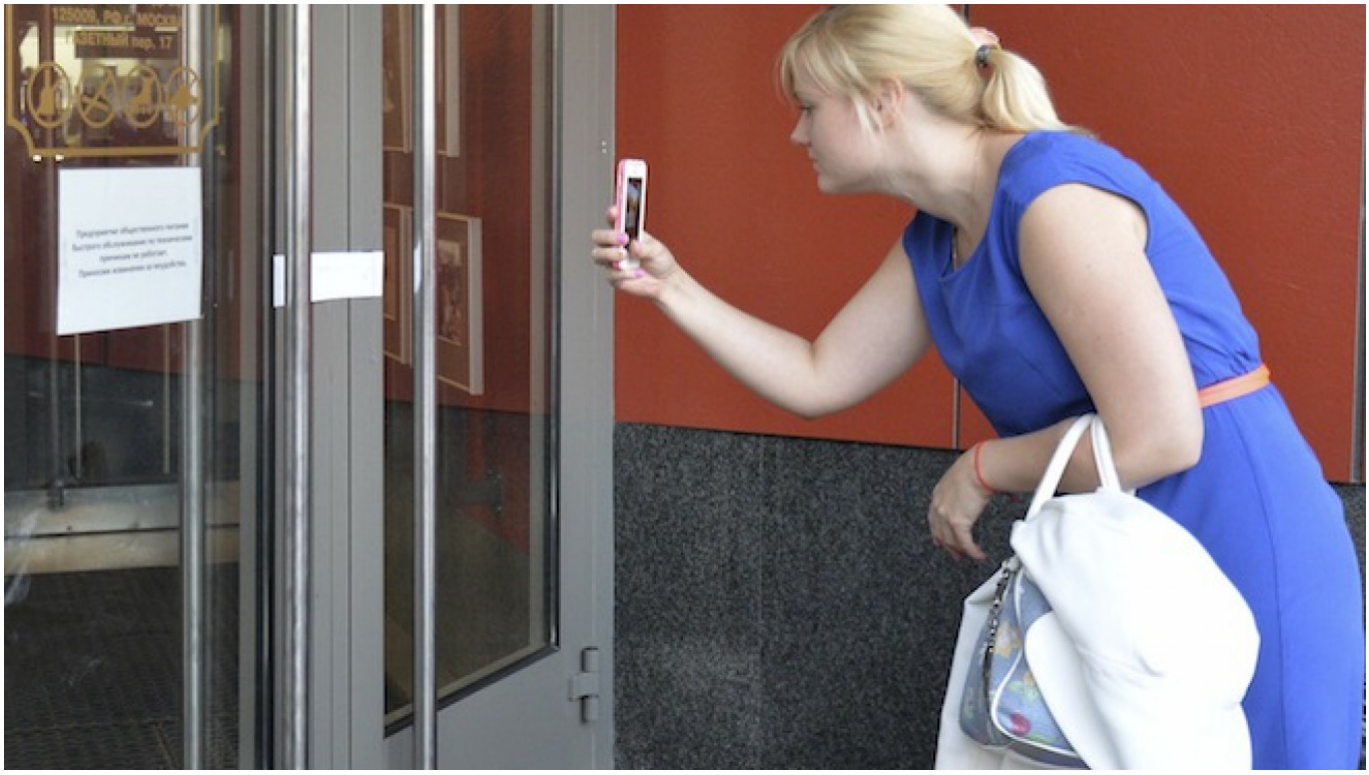
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McDonald's in Tatarstan Targeted as Russia Expands Sanitary Checks

By The Moscow Times

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A woman takes a picture of a closed McDonald's restaurant in Moscow.

Russian authorities extended their scrutiny of McDonald's on Friday to the semi-autonomous republic of Tatarstan, carrying out sanitary inspections at several restaurants run by the U.S. fast food chain.

The country's food safety watchdog said it had no plans to close down the firm's business there, two days after the agency shuttered three McDonald's branches in Moscow.

Coming against a backdrop of strained U.S.-Russian relations over Moscow's perceived role in the Ukraine crisis, the checks have been viewed by many businessmen as retaliation for Western sanctions which they fear could spread to other symbols of Western capitalism.

An agency spokeswoman in Tatarstan's largest city, Kazan, said checks were under way at McDonald's, which has 17 restaurants in the region — one of the highest concentrations

in Russia outside Moscow and St Petersburg.

"We are making checks there. There are some irregularities and we are likely to punish them, but we will not close down their restaurants," she said.

McDonald's operates 440 restaurants in Russia and considers the country one of its top seven markets outside the United States and Canada, according to its 2013 annual report. Almost 1 million people a day use its restaurants in Russia.

In Tatarstan, some 1,500 people work for the fast-food chain.

A McDonald's Russia spokeswoman said earlier this week the firm was aware of the situation and "have always been and are now open to any checks."

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