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Russian Blogger Says Interrogated for Creating 'Gay Terrorist Underworld'

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Andrei Marchenko

A blogger in the Khabarovsk region in Russia's Far East says the Federal Security Service (FSB) has accused him of creating a "gay terrorist underworld" in a bid to bring about regime change, regional news website Amurburg.ru reported.

Unidentified investigators came to Andrei Marchenko's home Thursday and "turned the apartment inside out" searching for U.S. dollars, extremist materials and drugs, Marchenko told Amurburg.ru.

"They were very aggressive, and one investigator said immediately that I'd have to go with them after the raid; he was apparently very confident that they'd find something. Judging by the two video cameras [they had with them], they were expecting to find millions of dollars, banned books and a bunch of underage boys," Marchenko was cited as saying.

The blogger, who has expressed support on his LiveJournal blog for both gay rights and the Kiev government currently battling a pro-Russian insurgency, said he was first summoned

to the FSB's offices a week ago and accused of creating a "gay terrorist underworld" with a local LGBT activist, Alexander Yermoshkin, with the aim of fomenting an "Orange Revolution" in Khabarovsk.

The Orange Revolution was a series of massive public rallies protesting election rigging in Ukraine in 2004 that brought about new elections and a different, pro-Western president.

Investigators also told Marchenko that it was his posts on social networks in support of Kiev against the separatists that had attracted their attention, he said.

On Thursday, he posted several photos of benches painted in the colors of the Ukrainian flag in Khabarovsk, with the caption: "Politically incorrect benches in a courtyard in Khabarovsk. I'm curious, is the anti-extremism department already searching for those who painted them?"

Shortly after that post, a new message appeared: "This is Andrei's friend writing at his request. A search of his apartment was conducted this evening. They're accusing him of extremism and of supporting Ukraine," the message read.

During the search at his home, four computers were confiscated, along with five phones, several USB drives, hard drives and a modem, leaving him without means of communication at home, the blogger told Amurburg.ru.

Marchenko said he was told to return for questioning on Friday, and that investigators were seeking to charge him with public incitement of hatred. The charge carries a maximum punishment of four years behind bars.

There has been no confirmation from the FSB on any case against Marchenko.

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