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150 Vigilante Street Racers Wage Manhunt Around Moscow for Gang of Highway Killers

By Allison Quinn

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More than 100 street racers in Moscow have stocked up on weapons and night-vision goggles and set out on a manhunt for a group of suspected serial killers who have been targeting drivers on remote stretches of highway since May, Izvestia reported Thursday.

"We're searching the forests using thermal-imaging devices, stopping at all the refueling stations, checking everyone, searching vehicles. People are understanding about it when we explain whom we are looking for," street-racing club Smotra.ru founder Erik Davidych was cited as saying by the newspaper.

About 150 members of the club have already spent a week searching for the killers, dubbed the "Grand Theft Auto gang," Davidych told Izvestia.

The suspected killers apparently prey on their victims at random, just like in the popular video

game. The first killing by the "GTA gang" came to light on May 3, when the bodies of a married couple were found near the M-4 highway outside of Moscow. The two pensioners had been shot dead after they stopped to change a flat tire.

According to tabloid Moskovsky Komsomolets, the killers have been using chains of iron spikes to puncture unsuspecting drivers' tires and force them to pull over before shooting them dead.

Since May, Moskovsky Komsomolets has reported that there have been 14 similar murders. The Investigative Committee has not officially connected all the crimes. Police have issued statements about four highway killings, and have not said there is a connection.

Most recently, a body found on Sept. 9 near Kashirskoye Shosse prompted speculation that the group had struck again, but that killing differed from the earlier ones in that the victim had sustained knife wounds in addition to gunshot wounds.

Though the gang has apparently been able to successfully evade police, Davidych seemed confident that the street racers could make progress in the case.

"We're working using the leads provided by police," Davidych said, adding that many of the volunteers taking part in the manhunt had previously worked in law enforcement.

"We're armed, so finding three idiots with guns won't be difficult," he said.

He did not specify what sort of weapons members of the club were carrying.

Contact the author at a.quinn@imedia.ru

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