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Russian Customs Officials Turn Back Ton of Western Tea at the Border

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Russia refused to allow a ton of German and U.S. tea into the country.

Russia has refused to allow almost a ton of German and U.S. tea into the country, with customs officials saying the produce violated Moscow's ban on Western food imports.

After 970 kilograms of German herbal tea was detained Friday in the Siberian region of Novosibirsk, officials said Monday that they had seized a smaller shipment of tea and ice-drink mixes on the far eastern island of Sakhalin, the Interfax news agency reported.

About 28 kilograms of tea produced by a U.S. company was part of the cargo aboard a ship arriving from the South Korean port of Busan, the Sakhalin region's customs service was quoted as saying by Interfax.

A firm that was supposed to receive the cargo confirmed that the tea originated from the U.S. but said that it was included in the shipment in error and would be "urgently" sent back, the statement said.

The incident followed the seizure of German herbal tea in Novosibirsk that contained slices of dried apples, pineapple, currants and rose hips, according to a statement posted Friday on the regional customs service website.

In August, Moscow banned imports of fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and dairy from the EU, the U.S., Norway, Canada and Australia in response to Western sanctions against Russia over its policy on Ukraine.

"This product will not make it to store shelves," the regional customs service said in the statement, adding the Novosibirsk trading company that carried the cargo would "either have to take it back to Germany or destroy it on the territory of Russia."

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