

Workers Arrested for Covering 'Moscow' Flowerbed in Ukrainian Colors

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The  Moscow Times

The flower bed, which spells out the word Moscow, was covered with 'Ukraine-colored' blue and yellow wood shavings.

Police have detained four workers for covering a flowerbed spelling the name of the Russian capital on a lawn in central Moscow with 'Ukraine-colored' woodchips.

The workers only had time to pick out two of the giant Cyrillic letters along the central Mokhovaya Ulitsa — located a stone's throw from the Kremlin — in blue and yellow colored woodchips before the Federal Security Service, a successor agency to the KGB, noticed the word was taking on supposedly inappropriate hues, pro-Kremlin news website LifeNews reported Monday.

But the head of a contractor firm that maintains Moscow's central parks, who was identified told LifeNews that his workers were simply under pressure to meet a deadline and had used whatever woodchips were available at their warehouse, unaware of their political undertones.

He also argued that the supposedly yellow chips were more of an orange shade, LifeNews reported.

The detainees, including the head of the firm and some of his employees, were released after writing a statement to the effect that they had simply made an error of judgment, the report said.

The yellow woodchips were subsequently removed, and the lawn now spells the word "Moskva" — the Russian name for the nation's capital — in blue, Russian media reported.

A spokesman for Moscow's central district administration, Pavel Bolshunov, told the Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper that there were plans to add red and green woodchips to the word.

"This was just a contingency, which had no political connotations," Bolshunov was quoted as saying.

A similar incident several months ago saw a criminal investigation being opened after utility workers painted a high-voltage transmission tower in southern Moscow in Ukraine's national colors, also apparently unaware that the color combination could be interpreted as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine, where government troops are fighting pro-Russian separatists.

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