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Russian Investigators Launch Extremism Case Over Pro-Kiev Art

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After an artist sent a bundle of posters to an exhibition in Kiev, Perm region authorities launched a criminal case on charges of "inciting extremism," a news report said Thursday.

The posters, some of which have been published online, call on Ukrainians to destroy the pro-Russian separatists in the country's turbulent east, as well as any Russian soldiers found on Ukrainian soil, Kommersant reported.

The artist, identified by Kommersant as Anton Myrzin, faces up to five years in prison if found guilty.

One of the pieces, all of which were made to resemble Soviet-era propaganda posters, features an image of potato beetles — a common slur for patriotic Russians — next to a caption urging violence in case of an encounter with a Russian.

Anti-Kremlin activists and pro-Kiev activists have evoked the image of potato beetles in mocking the ubiquitous St. George ribbon, often worn by pro-Kremlin figures and Russian

officials. The comparison stems from the fact that the orange-and-black pattern on the beetle's back resembles the popular, patriotic ribbon.

The Perm resident wound up on the Federal Security Service's radar after the notorious Russian hacker "Hell" published his personal information on the Internet, attracting the attention of State Duma Deputy Alexander Khinshtein, who called on investigators to look into whether the work could be considered extremist.

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