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Less Porn, More Scripture on New Russian Orthodox Search Engine

By Matthew Bodner

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The service will continue to be tested and improved over the next several months, Grymov said.

A special search engine for Russian Orthodox Christians tailored to the needs of believers was forced to shut down on Wednesday by a cyber attack hours after going live.

The engine, dubbed "Rublev," was launched on Tuesday by Russian film director Yury Grymov after two years of development, Grymov wrote on his Facebook page, where he introduced the service as "an intuitive and easy-to-use [Internet] guide for believers and those who are just beginning their path in the world of Orthodox faith."

Its motto is a quote from the Bible: "Seek, and ye shall find."

The Facebook post said a test version of the service had been launched at rublev.com, but just hours after the site's unveiling its main page showed a message explaining it had been taken offline by a DDoS cyber attack — when a website is overloaded by hostile bombardment

of information requests.

"The site has been ATTACKED," Grymov said on Facebook Wednesday, adding, "I am surprised and saddened that such creative undertakings could stick in someone's throat in our country."

According to Russian Internet blog TJournal, Rublev's interface mimics Russia's popular Yandex search engine. But unlike Yandex, if you search for "porn" on Rublev the site redirects you to the seventh commandment — "thou shall not commit adultery," Tjournal said.

Russia has re-embraced Orthodox Christianity since the fall of the officially atheist Soviet Union, but although a majority of Russians identify themselves as Orthodox, church attendance remains low.

Grymov, a well-known film director during the 1990s and former director of liberal-leaning television news station Dozhd, said the engine would allow users to submit questions to priests, access an easy-to-understand Orthodox calendar and search for Orthodox-friendly Internet content.

Alongside curated lists of prayers, monasteries and churches, the site will also feature news from the Orthodox world, including interviews with religious leaders, and even their blogs.

The service will continue to be tested and improved over the next several months, Grymov said, adding that a free mobile Rublev app was also planned that will allow users to stream Orthodox services to their phone.

Grymov has launched a fundraising campaign the develop the mobile version of the service. So far a little over 30,000 rubles ($485) of the targeted 1 million rubles ($16,000) has been collected, Grymov said. It is unclear how much money has been invested in the project to date.

Interested parties can donate to the mobile project on Russian crowd-funding site Nachinanie.ru.

Rublev is the second new Russian-made search engine to pop up over the last year. In May, state-owned telecommunications firm Rostelecom announced a government-sponsored search engine called Sputnik, which promised to be more relevant to Russian users than foreign competitors like Google, for example by providing local data like locations of nearby pharmacies.

Many at the time of Sputnik's launch saw its purpose as more insidious — a means for the government to filter Internet search results, especially with regards to news articles.

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