

Nazi Figurines at Iconic Moscow Toy Store Incite Criminal Inquiry

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Moscow investigators have opened a criminal case over the sale of Nazi figurines at a landmark downtown toy store that was reopened last week after years of renovations, according to a statement released by prosecutors Saturday.

Prosecutors described the figurines as busts of soldiers and Nazi officers, including the Waffen SS, wearing uniforms commonly seen among such forces between 1939 and 1945.

The case was launched on a charge of "inciting hatred and hostility, and also abasing the dignity of ... veterans of the Great Patriotic War," the statement read, referring to World War II.

In connection with the case, the Central Children's Store's general director has been warned about violating Russian legislation on extremism.

The prosecutors have sent their materials to the city branch of the Investigative Committee,

which in turn launched the case, spokeswoman for the Moscow prosecutors' office Yelena Rossokhina said in comments carried by the Interfax news agency.

Several calls to the toy store's press representative went unanswered on Sunday afternoon.

The drama has unfolded against the backdrop of large-scale celebrations set to take place in Moscow on Victory Day. On May 9, Russia will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Nazis' surrender in World War II.

This isn't the first time that the store, which reopened on March 31 on central Moscow's Lubyanka Square, has been mired in scandal in recent weeks.

The store faced a barrage of criticism over advertisements posted on YouTube in the run-up to its reopening that featured children pretending to interrogate their parents.

The ads made fun of the store's location, across the street from the infamous KGB's former headquarters Lubyanka, in which thousand of political dissidents were interrogated and tortured during the height of Soviet-era repressions.

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