The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Schoolboys Detained for Roasting Potatoes Over Eternal Flame

By Anna Dolgov

May 21, 2015



Eternal flames, such as this one in the city of Puskino, are a common sight in many Russian towns.

Police have detained three children on suspicion of roasting potatoes on an eternal flame monument to World War II soldiers in Russia's Tula region and also setting memorial wreaths on fire, media reports said.

Investigators have opened a criminal case on charges of "desecrating dead bodies and their burial grounds," regional police spokesman Andrei Yartsev said, Russian government daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Wednesday.

The suspects are three schoolboys aged 11, 12 and 14, the report said. They are accused of roasting potatoes on the flames of the monument to soldiers who defended the town of Aleksin, in the Tula region, during World War II.

The boys are also accused of burning memorial wreaths local residents had placed at the memorial during the recent May 9 Victory Day celebrations, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported.

The oldest of the suspects, who attends a school for children with special needs according to the LifeNews website, was already under investigation for allegedly stealing two bicycles, the report said, adding that he was placed in a juvenile detention center while investigators questioned the other two boys at a local police station.

Yartsev said police had questioned all three suspects "in the presence of their legal representatives," Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported.

A veterans' association in Aleksin issued a statement saying that "all normal people are outraged and disgusted by the barbaric escapade of the vandals," municipal Aleksin-City.info portal reported.

The statement added that the incident was an expression of "neo-fascism" and added a few strongly derogatory terms. It was not immediately clear whether the veterans were aware of the age of the offenders.

News of the vandalism also came as a 24-year-old man in Russia's republic of Buryatia was detained on suspicion of setting fire to the wreaths surrounding a monument to Soviet veterans in the regional capital of Ulan Ude.

"The fire burned the wreaths, damaged marble slabs, and tarred the relief of the memorial," the regional branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry said, Interfax reported. Police have opened an criminal investigation into the man, who is believed to have been intoxicated at the time of the incident, a regional Interior Ministry spokesman told Interfax.

Russia's large-scale celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War II this month have been marred by a series of incidents, some of them involving the eternal flame monuments that grace many Russian cities.

A 19-year-old man was hospitalized last month with burns to 85 percent of his body after his jacket caught fire at an eternal flame monument on St. Petersburg's Field of Mars and caused a pressurized pepper spray in his pocket to explode, LifeNews reported.

The man, who police said may have been drunk at the time of the incident, tried to extinguish the fire on his jacket by rolling around on the ground, but failed and ran toward a nearby path in the park, where passersby put out the flames and called an ambulance, the report said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/21/russian-schoolboys-detained-for-roasting-potatoes-ove

r-eternal-flame-a46739