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Petersburg Police Find Trio of Lion Cubs in Parking Lot

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Police in St. Petersburg have come across a cage containing three lion cubs in one of the city's parking lots, a news report said Monday.

Following the discovery on Sunday, the cubs' owner provided paperwork showing that the animals belonged to him, the TASS news agency reported, citing a regional police spokesman.

"Nevertheless, police are currently checking the legality of importing these animals onto Russian territory," the police spokesman added in the report. Later a police source said the cubs would remain with their owner, TASS reported.

It was not immediately clear what subspecies of lion the cubs belonged to, or where they had come from. Populations of both African and Asian lions are falling fast despite conservation efforts.

Asiatic lions — of which there are only 250-300 left in the wild, according to the World Wildlife Fund — fall under the Washington Convention, which seeks to stop trade that will

threaten the survival of endangered species in the wild.

Last June, a 50-kilogram lion cub scared passengers and staff traveling on a train from Moscow to the Siberian city of Novy Urengoi after its owner, who had smuggled the animal on board by passing it off as a domestic cat, released it from its cage and was then unable to control it, news reports said at the time.

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