

20 Tons of Black Market Smartphones Seized at Russian Airport

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Russia's Federal Security Service has seized 20 tons of black market smartphones at the Pulkovo Airport in St Petersburg — an amount retailers said represented up to 30 percent of the city's total smartphone sales in December, the Vedomosti newspaper reported Friday.

The cargo — including 15,000 Lenovo A560 phones and 35,000 of Apple's iPhones and iPads — had arrived in Pulkovo from Beijing; the packages were addressed to a St. Petersburg-based company Palmira LLC, Vedomosti said.

The newspaper added that none of the electronics retailers interviewed by its reporters were familiar with the company name.

General Director of Lenovo's Russian operations Gleb Mishin, was cited as saying that the A560 model was not officially available on the Russian market.

“Although black market sales do not account for a large share [of the market], this could be a

blow for us, especially if the sellers then tried to undercut prices,” he added, Vedomosti reported.

The confiscated phones could account for 5 percent of all Lenovo sales in December, Mishin said.

Up to 15 percent of smartphones sold in Russia by mid-2014 had been brought into the country illegally, with the black market shrinking as the ruble's downward slide extended, Vedomosti reported.

Maria Zaikina, a spokeswoman for Russia's second largest independent mobile retailer Svyaznoy, was quoted as saying that the figure could be as high as 30-40 percent for some popular brands.

The key problem is that non-certified products may not support a number of functions in Russia, such as high-speed 4G internet, she added.

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