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FSB Suspects 1,600 of Funding IS

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Director of the Federal Security Service Alexander Bortnikov

Russian law enforcers suspect more than 1,600 individuals and legal entities of providing financial aid to the Islamic State, Federal Security Service (FSB) head Alexander Bortnikov said, the RIA Novovsti news agency reported Tuesday.

"A joint plan to cut off the terror sponsorship channels has been developed ... according to it, 5,000 investigations have been conducted [and] 270 criminal cases have been opened," Bortnikov said at a joint National Anti-terror Committee and Federal Operative Staff meeting.

By September, there were about 1,800 Russian citizens fighting with IS, Interior Ministry head Vladimir Kolokoltsev was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency.

The National Anti-terror Committee had earlier voiced more modest estimates – about 1,500 Russians, with 150 of them who were already dead.

IS has previously called for Islamic fighters to take revenge on Russia after President Vladimir Putin launched an air bombardment campaign in Syria against IS militants and opposition forces fighting against Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Russia began its campaign in Syria on Sept. 30, but Moscow's air strikes intensified after the downing of a Russian passenger airplane over Egypt's Sinai Peninsula on Oct. 31. IS claimed responsibility for the downing, which killed all 224 people aboard, and President Vladimir Putin pledged to punish those responsible.

IS is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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