The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Police in Southern Russia Link Crime Increase to Ukraine Crisis

By Anna Dolgov

March 18, 2016



Police in southern Russia have raised concerns about an alleged increase in crime, including the smuggling of weapons and explosives from eastern Ukraine, the RIA Novosti news agency reported Thursday.

The Rostov region borders eastern Ukraine, where Moscow-backed separatists are fighting Kiev government forces.

Law enforcement agencies foiled more than 60 attempts to smuggle weapons and ammunition from the neighboring country last year, the head of the anti-extremism department of the Rostov branch of the Interior Ministry, Artur Metsger, was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti. Officials seized more than 200 hand grenades, 40 firearms, and about 6,000 ammunition units, Metsger said.

Ukraine and Western governments have accused Moscow of supplying weapons and fighters to separatist insurgents in eastern Ukraine, and have been urging Russia to secure its border

with the rebel region to prevent ordnance from seeping through the porous frontier.

Southern Russia receives many people fleeing the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the Rostov region has seen a surge in crime committed by Ukrainian nationals, Metsger was quoted by RIA Novosti as saying.

The number of cases rose to 8,000 in 2015 from 5,000 in 2013 – the year before Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine and the insurgency in the east began — he said. The number of offenses blamed on Ukrainian suspects nearly tripled over the same period, reaching 540 cases in 2015 from 186 cases in 2013, Metsger said, RIA Novosti reported.

Most of the crimes involved theft, burglary, robbery, assault and dealing in drugs or weapons, while lesser "administrative" offenses have also spiked, he was quoted as saying.

Rostov police also fear "anti-Russian" movements crossing the border "with the aim of destabilizing the situation," Metsger said, RIA Novosti reported.

Police officers and agents from the Federal Security Service detained a 17-year-old Ukrainian boy in December 2015, who allegedly crossed into Russia to organize a bombing, Metsger was quoted as saying. Investigators found an explosive device at the youth's residence, he said, RIA Novosti reported.

Contact the author at newsreporter@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/03/18/police-in-southern-russia-link-crime-increase-to-ukraine-crisis-a52205