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# German Police Chief Warns of Russian Mafia Threat

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The head of Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office has warned of Russian and Eastern European organized crime gangs resurfacing in Western Europe.

Speaking to German newspaper Die Welt on Sunday, police chief Holger Münch said that authorities were seeing "the active development and spread of Russian-Eurasian organized crime in the West."

The gangs are causing far-reaching damage through seemingly low-scale crime such as simple theft and organized robbery of stores, Münch claimed. A single gang is believed to have caused losses of $500 million in 2015 through organized shoplifting raids, he said.

Münch also said that Russian and Eurasian criminals had established vast recruitment networks in German prisons, where eight to 10 percent of criminals speak Russian or have Russian roots. He named the most dangerous identifiable individuals in the gangs as "thieves-in-law" — a traditional high-profile position from Soviet-era crime gangs, where

one person held authority over large groups of criminals.

Germany is not the only country to crack down on Russian organized crime groups.

Spanish authorities arrested six Russian citizens and a Ukrainian last month on charges of money laundering. Spain also issued an arrest warrant in 2015 for 12 Russian officials suspected of ties with Tambov mafia chief Gennady Petrov.

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