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Smugglers Secretly Repairing Russian Roads to Boost Business

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Gangs smuggling goods into Russia have secretly repaired a road on the Belarussian border in order to boost business, the TASS news agency reported Monday.

Smugglers have transformed the gravel track in the Smolensk region in order to help their heavy goods vehicles traveling on the route, said Alexander Laznenko from the Smolensk region border agency. The criminal groups have widened and raised the road and added additional turning points, he said.

The road, which connects Moscow to the Belarussian capital of Minsk, is known to be used by smugglers wishing to avoid official customs posts and is now under official surveillance.

A convoy of trucks was recently stopped on the road carrying 175 tons of sanctioned Polish fruit worth 13 million rubles ($200,000). The produce was subsequently destroyed, TASS reported.

Local border guards, customs and police officers have checked over 73,000 vehicles entering Russia from Belarus this year, Laznenko said, claiming that the number of heavy goods vehicles crossing the border from Belarus has increased dramatically in the last year, he said.

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