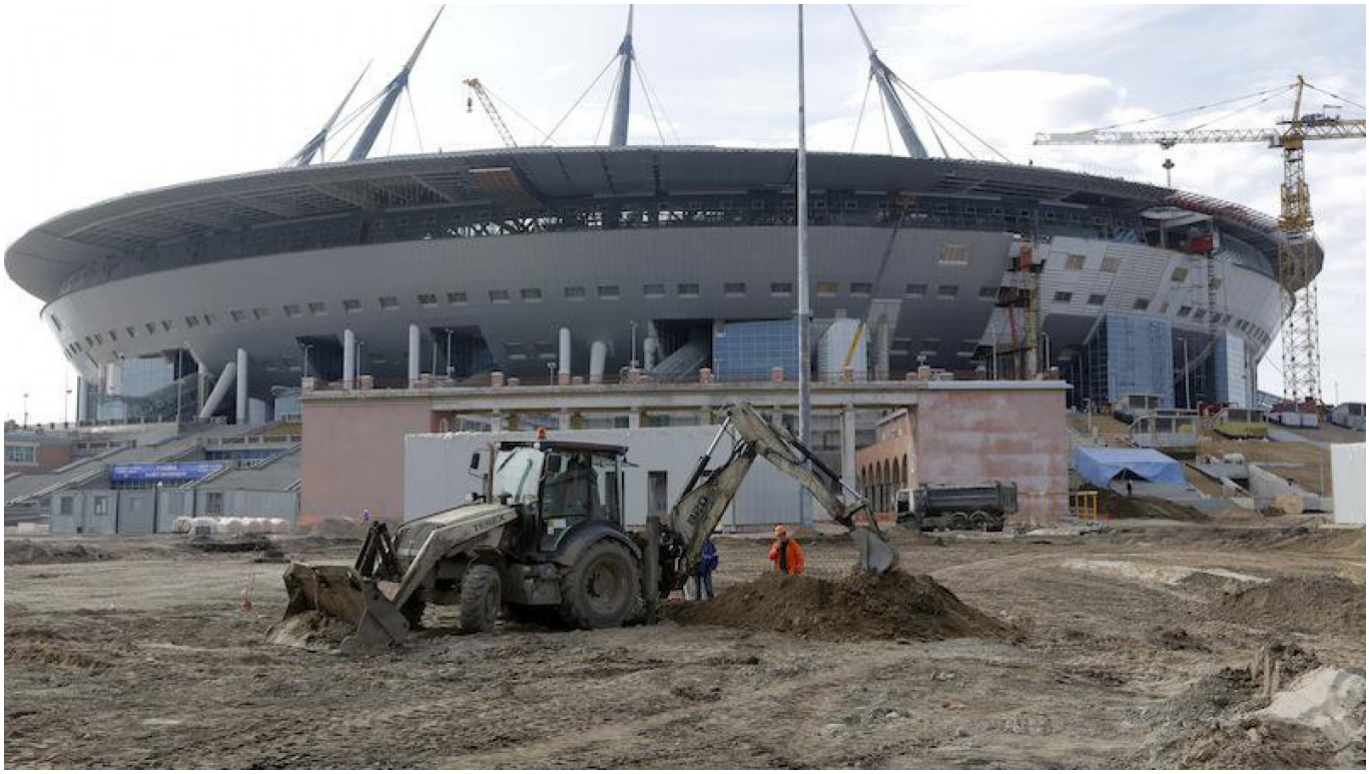
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Police Raid Offices of St. Petersburg World Cup Stadium Contractor

August 24, 2016



Dmitry Lovetsky / AP

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has raided the offices of the contractor building St. Petersburg's World Cup stadium, the Fontanka news website reported Wednesday.

Eyewitnesses claim that between 10 and 12 officers entered the Metrostroy company offices in St. Petersburg at 10 am on Wednesday morning, "heading straight to the manager's office."

The construction of the 69,000-capacity Zenit Arena has been beset with financial difficulties and delays since building work began in 2007. Its current budget of 39.2 billion rubles ($605 million) is some five times higher than original estimates.

Authorities chose Metrostroy to complete work on the stadium ⊠earlier this month after terminating their contract with the ⊠stadium's previous general contractor over reportedly slow and poor quality ⊠work.

The stadium must be operational before the end of the year in order to host matches in next

June’s Confederations Cup, a warm-up tournament for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko announced last month that the venue was “85-86 percent ready,” and that any possibility of the stadium not being completed on time was “out of the question.”

Metrostroy Director Vadim Alexandrov said Tuesday that St. Petersburg residents would also be invited to help complete the project. "The stadium will be thermally insulated from October, leaving just the fitting and assembly work," he said.

“This is where you [the residents of St. Peterburg] come in,” he said at a press conference.

“Do you remember how great it used to be [in the Soviet era]? Towards the end of a project, we used to get the whole city involved, students as well, anyone at all,” he said.

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