The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Justice Ministry Says Russia's Prison System Is at Risk of Mass Riots

October 03, 2016



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Russia's Justice Ministry has prepared draft legislation that would require the government to provide the Federal Penitentiary Service with the aircraft necessary to send reinforcements to facilities at risk of prisoner riots. Officials say a recent reshuffling of Russia's major police agencies has "created favorable conditions" for mass unrest across the penitentiary system.

According to the legislation's explanatory note, the aircraft previously reserved for deploying special forces to prisons under duress belonged to the Interior Ministry, but this equipment was swallowed up by the newly formed National Guard.

Justice Ministry officials say the rate of "unlawful acts" inside Russian prisons has been rising for the past several years. "In addition," the ministry says, "the kinds of acts perpetrated by convicts and prisoners are becoming more sophisticated and aggressive."

Russia's National Guard was created by presidential decree in April this year, formed on the

foundations of the existing Interior Ministry. The new agency is charged, in part, with suppressing riots in populated areas, including at prisons, if necessary.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/03/justice-ministry-says-russias-prison-system-is-at-risk-of-mass-riots-a55582