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Counterfeit Alcohol Producers Arrested in Siberia

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Maxim Stulov / Vedomosti

Five individuals accused of running "mini-factories" that produced counterfeit alcohol products have been arrested in the Siberian cities of Irkutsk and Usolye-Siberskoye, the Russian Ministry of the Interior's press office has announced.

"The most active participants of the organized group of so-called bootleggers, including the organizers, are charged with the sale of unmarked alcoholic products on a large scale and the marketing of counterfeit brand labels," the Interior Ministry statement read.

After reports of the arrests circulated local media, a resident who knew one of the suspects directed police to a trailer parked in the city of Shelekhov, which was found to contain 12 tons of alcoholic liquid.

It was previously reported that two mini-factories which produced counterfeit vodka on an industrial scale had been discovered by authorities in Irkutsk and Usolye-Siberskoye. Authorities arrested nine suspects and seized over half a million empty bottles, hundreds of

thousands of forged brand labels, tax stamps, as well as nearly 30 tons of the counterfeit product.

Investigators discovered hawthorn berry bath concentrate, or *boyaryshnik* as it is known in Russian in one of the mini factories. Counterfeit boyaryshnik tainted with methanol was responsible for mass poisoning last December in Irkutsk, which killed almost 80 people.

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