The Moscow Times
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Russian Newspaper Calls for Robot Riot Cops to Be Unleashed on Anti-Corruption Protests

March 29, 2017



Law enforcement officers line up along a street as they block a rally in Moscow. **Sergei Karpukhin / Reuters**

A pro-Kremlin newspaper has called for robotic riot cops to be used against demonstrators if more anti-corruption protests take place without government approval.

Russian tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda said that police could use robots to shower protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets in a bid to subdue unauthorized gatherings.

"There really is enough money to suppress any illegal rally or large-scale provocation in the Internal Affairs Ministry arsenal," the newspaper wrote. "There are cars with water cannons, and guns that shoot tear gas and light-and-noise grenades."

The article also claimed that officers could use armed robots to harness these weapons

without "putting themselves at risk." "Kicking a robot is useless - and it hurts your feet," the newspaper said.

The newspaper made the claims after top Russian official publicly pledged to unleash the country's full police arsenal on future unapproved protests.

"If these 'provocations' begin to appear more frequently, we can put the expansive arsenal at our disposal into play," the deputy chief of Russia's Internal Affairs Ministry Igor Zubov told the TASS news agency.

He also said that the riot police who patrolled central Moscow on Sunday had been instructed to keep the number of arrests to a minimum and not to use force.

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Zubov confirmed that one police officer had been injured during the unrest, enduring a head trauma. "He suffered alone and he suffered seriously," Zubov said. "The National Guard and I will draw appropriate conclusions from this."

Aside from traditional tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets, Russia's riot police bought a non-lethal psychoacoustic system to disperse crowds in April 2016. The system, which emits noises designed to cause discomfort to those in the immediate vicinity, is similar to those used during the 2014 Ferguson riots in the United States.

Police estimate that 8,000 people met in central Moscow on Sunday to protest against corruption within the Russian government. According to local authorities, more than 600 people were detained at the rally, which had not been granted a permit by the Moscow government. Russian human rights group OVD-Info estimates that over 1,000 people were detained in the capital alone, and approximately 1,400 detained across the country as a whole.

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