

Teen 'Imitators' Detained in Russian Bomb Threat Crackdown

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Roman Pimenov / Interpress / TASS

Russian authorities have detained teenagers suspected of making some of the anonymous phone calls that have led to the evacuations of more than 150,000 people in two dozen cities across Russia, the Kommersant business daily [reported](#) Friday.

The bomb scares that swept nearly 500 malls, schools and transport hubs in cities including Moscow and St. Petersburg since Sunday have been downplayed by state-run television channels and the Federal Security Service (FSB) has instructed local authorities not to comment on the hoaxes to avoid copycat calls, the Vedomosti newspaper [reported](#) Friday.

However, the deputy governor of St. Petersburg said on Friday that the encrypted calls originated from abroad. "I cannot say yet what specific areas these calls came from, but I have no doubt that we will find out," Alexander Govorunov was [cited](#) as saying by the Fontanka news outlet.

The governor of the Kemerovo region — where more than a dozen schools, hospitals, and government buildings were cleared on Wednesday — said the wave of anonymous calls was just the beginning. “I believe that we should get used to this,” Aman Tuleev was [cited](#) as saying by local media on Friday. “The further we go, the worse it will get.”

One of the suspects is a 17-year-old who was detained in the Moscow region town of Volokolamsk on charges of falsely reporting an act of terrorism, Kommersant reported on Thursday.

Related article: [The Bomb Scares Sweeping Russia, Explained](#)

According to Kommersant, he is one of several teen “imitators” identified after they used unencrypted phones to issue the threats. A Federal Security Service (FSB) source [told](#) the RBC news outlet on Friday that it opened a criminal investigation into the calls on charges of falsely reporting an act of terrorism.

Law enforcement officials said earlier this week that the banned terrorist group Islamic State could be behind the string of bomb scares sweeping Russia or that the calls may be originating in Ukraine.

The leader of an Orthodox Christian fundamentalist group [told](#) the Meduza news outlet on Thursday the bomb scares could be linked to an upcoming biopic about a Tsar’s affair with a ballerina that has sparked a violent backlash among Orthodox activists.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday the string of alerts amounted to “telephone terrorism.” Authorities are taking measures to identify its perpetrators, he added.

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