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Russian Cossacks to Report Kissing Same-Sex World Cup Fans to Police, Media Says

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Valery Matytsin / TASS

Cossack vigilantes on patrol during the upcoming World Cup say they will report to police if they spot same-sex couples kissing in public.

Rostov-on-Don, one of 11 Russian cities to host the football championship that kicks off in 10 days, will reportedly feature 300 Cossacks helping regular police squads keep streets safe. The militias gained nationwide attention after being filmed beating anti-government protesters with leather horsewhips in early May in Moscow.

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"We'll tell the police to take note of [kissing same-sex couples], the rest is up to the police,"

the U.S.-funded Current Time television network quoted Oleg Barannikov, head of the Almighty Don Host patrol units, as saying in a report published Monday.

The Cossacks reportedly pledged to keep their leather whips at home during the June 14-July 15 tournament, but militia member Dmitry Voskresov maintained they could help police disperse crowds.

"We could make a reprimand, ask [fans] to behave. But only the police can impose fines or do other things," Voskresov told Current Time.

Meanwhile in Moscow, City Hall pledged not to deploy Cossack militia units during the World Cup after it emerged that the municipal administration had funded Cossacks to train to ensure public safety.

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