

# News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Yelena Afonina / TASS

## Chechnya explosion

A young woman blew herself up near a police checkpoint in the Chechen capital of Grozny in southern Russia after being stopped for a document check.

She reportedly detonated a home-made explosive device when police asked her to stop and present her documents. Russian media [reported](#) that there were no other casualties in the attack.

## Tainted visas

A joint report by the open-source Bellingcat investigative team and its Russian-language partner The Insider claimed that Russia's FSB intelligence agency had infiltrated the software of a company that processes British visa applications.

The report did not directly link the alleged breach to two suspected Russian agents who had been charged with poisoning ex-spy Sergei Skripal in Britain earlier this year. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [said](#) claims that the breach had been part of an FSB attempt to assist colleagues at the GRU military intelligence agency were a “fantasy.”

## **Church sex scandal**

The head of an Orthodox parish in southern Russia’s Krasnodar region has been suspended following reports that he had sexually harassed a 20-year-old altar boy.

The Yeisk diocese [barred](#) Hegumen Yury, 44, from the church for seven years for “denigrating holy dignity and bringing temptation to believers.”

## **Jail v. land**

At least two activists in Russia’s smallest region of Ingushetia have been reportedly beaten and [detained](#) during protest actions in territories that the local governor had recently swapped with neighboring Chechnya.

Local media said the two activists, blogger Ruslan Yandiyev and Magomed Mutsolgov, were [placed](#) under administrative arrest for five days.

## **Lift-off**

An unmanned rocket carrying cargo blasted off into space in the first launch of a Russian-made Soyuz-FG rocket from Kazakhstan's Baikonur cosmodrome since a dramatic aborted launch in October.

The rocket took off with a Progress MS-10 spacecraft carrying supplies to the International Space Station (ISS), docking at the ISS on Sunday.

## **Pleading agent**

U.S. prosecutors and lawyers for accused Russian agent Maria Butina are engaging in negotiations, both sides said in a court filing, raising the possibility the case could be resolved with a plea deal.

Butina, a former graduate student at American University in Washington who has publicly advocated for gun rights, was charged in July with acting as an agent of the Russian government and conspiracy to take actions on behalf of Russia.

## **Refinery fire**

A fire broke out in an oil refinery in southeastern Moscow, shutting down a unit that reportedly produced more than half of the plant's gasoline output.

The plant's owner – Gazprom Neft, the oil arm of Russian gas giant Gazprom – said the refinery in Kapotnya district was back working as usual apart from a catalytic cracking unit which was offline.

## **Signals jammed**

Russia's Ambassador to Finland Pavel Kuznetsov has been summoned to a meeting on Monday with Finnish state secretary Matti Anttonen over the disruption of Finland's global positioning system (GPS) signal during recent NATO war games.

The Kremlin last week dismissed an earlier allegation from Finland that Russia may have intentionally disrupted the signal during the war games.

## **Daredevil in the wind**

A tightrope walker was filmed walking on a rope suspended between two high-rises in St. Petersburg.

High winds [knocked](#) the daredevil off the highwire, leaving him hanging on a harness several times before he scrambled back on the rope to complete the feat.

*Includes reporting from Reuters.*

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