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Russia's National Guard Buys Laser-Equipped Vans to Disperse Protesters

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Russia's National Guard has bought two vans equipped with non-lethal lasers designed to disperse protesters and maintain crowd control, Russian media have reported, citing procurement data.

President Vladimir Putin founded the National Guard in 2016 to take over the functions of Russia's riot police and anti-terrorism forces. Its units have been deployed to disperse demonstrations in Moscow and other Russian cities in recent years.

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The service bought two GAZel minivans fitted with laser dazzlers capable of incapacitating their target, according to a May 2018 entry on the government's procurement website spotted by the openmedia.io news website on Wednesday.

“[The laser vans are] intended to provoke certain behavioral reactions in those who violate law and order – persistent avoidance that prevents them from being in the area of impact,” reads the description of the laser-equipped vans.

The two vans were scheduled to be delivered by Oct. 31 at a total cost of 65.2 million rubles ($988,000).

The laser-equipped vans’ supplier has also sold the Russian National Guard 128 shields with sonic effects similar to the U.S. Long Range Acoustic Device, the news site reported.

The shield’s effect is described as “forcing those who violate law and order to stop by creating remote oscillations at very low frequencies.”

Last year, a Russian arms manufacturer unveiled a stun shield with built-in electric shock devices, which the National Guard and OMON riot police have reportedly expressed interest in.

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