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Masked Men and Cossacks Stage Mock Arrests at Russian Church Holiday

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fontanka.ru / eparhia.karelia.ru

An Orthodox Church celebration in northern Russia was recently graced with an unorthodox performance when security officials staged a mock detention of armed criminals.

Images from Monday's event honoring St. Alexander Nevsky showed gun-toting men in camouflage joined by saber-wielding Cossacks as robed priests looked on from the church steps in the republic of Karelia. Children and cadets were reportedly in the audience.

The demonstration featuring dog handlers and masked men "was offered by the congregation, not our side," said Father Konstantin, a bishop's assistant at the church in the city of Petrozavodsk.

"Whether this experiment succeeded, I cannot yet say," he was quoted as saying by St. Petersburg's Fontanka news website.

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Russia has staged similar showcases, including a protest-dispersal course in the city of Yekaterinburg for schoolchildren this year.

The country has also become known for its eyebrow-raising historical reenactments including a mock execution of World War II traitors, one that paraded a man dressed in a Nazi uniform in a cage, and another that featured Siberian child actors dressing up as Nazi concentration camp prisoners.

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