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Russian Police Chief Fired Over Viral School Protest Lesson

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Maxim Shipenkov / EPA / TASS

Russian police dismissed a western Siberian department chief following an internal review into a viral video showing riot officers teaching schoolchildren to detain protesters, the police force announced Friday.

Monday's televised police presentation in the oil city of Nizhnevartovsk that circulated widely on social media showed teenagers with shields and riot gear carrying out mock detentions of volleyball-pelting fellow students. Another scene showed students in riot police helmets practicing maneuvers with shields and truncheons under the officers' supervision.

Related article: Russian Security Forces Teach Schoolchildren How to Detain Protesters

"It is decided after an internal review to dismiss Oleg Surayev, the acting head of the Russian Interior Ministry for Nizhnevartovsk," the Khanty-Mansiisk police department said in a statement Friday.

The department issued warnings against the Nizhnevartovsk branch's head of professional training and two senior public relations officers.

It reprimanded other professional training and public relations officers, as well as a senior HR department officer.

The Nizhnevartovsk department of education also announced an internal inspection into whether or not the anti-demonstration lesson complied with education law.

Russia's Interior Ministry had called the simulated protest involving minors "unacceptable" and handed warnings to police officials in Nizhnevartovsk and the Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous district this week. Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev also imposed disciplinary action against the region's police chief.

The school's principal praised the roleplay exercise, which came on the heels of a crackdown on mass rallies for the release of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Some 12,000 people were detained across Russia, including several in Nizhnevartovsk, with widespread allegations of police brutality against peaceful demonstrators.

The simulated crackdown comes amid Russian authorities' fervent efforts to deter young people from Navalny's protest movement in recent years, including through intimidation by school administrators and the criminalization of "involving minors" in unauthorized demonstrations.

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