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Russian Priest Blesses Police Van in Siberia

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A Russian Orthodox priest holds an aspergillum, a brush used to sprinkle holy water, next to a blue-and-white police truck with security grilles in its door and windows. **Interior Ministry in Buryatia**

A Russian Orthodox priest has blessed a police van on a recent visit to the Siberian republic of Buryatia, the regional Interior Ministry announced.

Russian priests have previously been seen sprinkling holy water on military hardware including ballistic missiles, submarines and space rockets as part of blessing rituals. The practice has become so widespread that a Church commission last year called for an end to blessing weapons of mass destruction.

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The Buryat Interior Ministry branch said the Orthodox priest visited its drug control department "as part of an established tradition of inviting clergymen of different religions at the beginning of the year."

“Father Nicholas consecrated the department’s offices, as well as official vehicles, with a special ‘Consecration of the Chariot’ rite,” the region’s Interior Ministry said in a statement on its website Friday.

An accompanying image showed the priest holding an aspergillum, a brush used to sprinkle holy water, next to a blue-and-white police truck with security grilles in its door and windows.

“The priest also met with the head of the drug control department and wished the team strength of spirit, success in the service and good health,” the statement read.

The photo op was published weeks after the detention of some 12,000 people at mass nationwide rallies supporting jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and takes place against the backdrop of President Vladimir Putin’s close alignment with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Russian Armed Forces last year unveiled a sprawling cathedral at a military-themed park outside Moscow, underscoring the close defense-church ties.

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