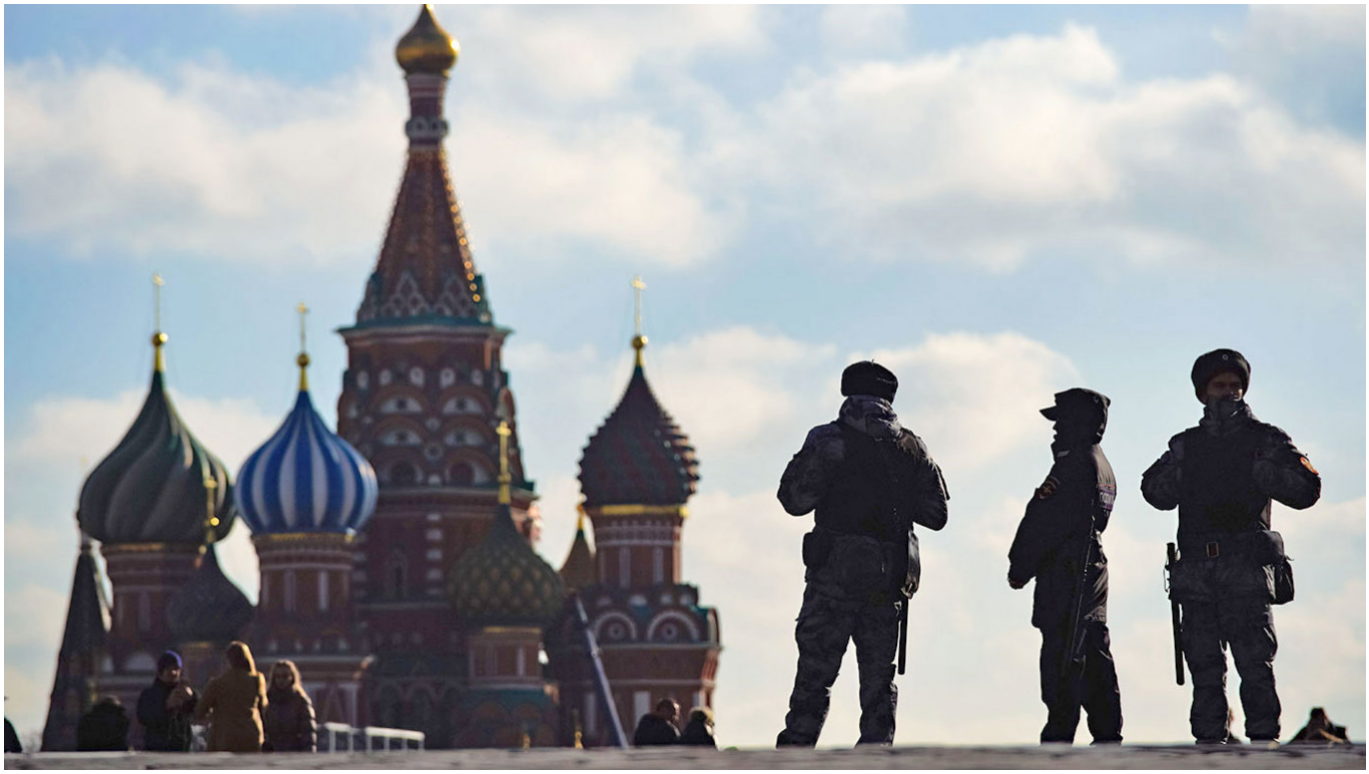
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Allows Police to Search Homes, Cars Without Warrants

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Russia has passed legislation granting police the right to break into homes and cars without a search warrant.

According to the law President Vladimir Putin signed on Tuesday, officers can now enter homes without a warrant even if persons inside are not officially classified as suspects.

The latest law grants police officers the power to search personal belongings "if there are grounds to suspect" that they may be holding drugs, explosives or stolen goods.

Police can also open vehicles to save lives, fight crime and terrorism, as well as ensure safety during situations of mass unrest or emergencies.

Persons who come into contact with Russian police officers are required to give their full names and provide identity documents when asked, according to the law.

Police officers are also authorized to cordon off not only crime scenes, but also mass

gatherings and other vaguely defined areas deemed “dangerous” for citizens.

Lawmakers say the changes to Russia’s law on police grants law enforcement officers the same powers as the National Guard.

Putin signed the legislation 1.5 years after lawmakers submitted the controversial bill for consideration.

Putin’s Human Rights Commission has criticized the law as a pathway toward arbitrary detention.

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