The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Igor Generalov

Domestic crackdown

Over 4,600 people in 65 cities across Russia were detained Sunday at protests against Moscow's military operation in Ukraine, an independent monitor said, on the 11th day of the invasion.

OVD-Info, which monitors detentions at opposition protests, said more than 13,000 protesters have been detained at anti-war protests across Russia since the offensive began on Feb. 24.

Embed:

> More footage of protests in Putin’s home city today. Always the same anti-war chant pic.twitter.com/28JzKwWcdr

— Matthew Luxmoore (@mjluxmoore) March 6, 2022

Grounded fleets

At least six major Russian airlines announced over the weekend plans to suspend all international flights starting this week as Moscow faces crippling Western sanctions.

Russia's civil aviation body on Saturday said it had "recommended" Russian airlines operating rental planes registered in foreign countries cease flights abroad in order to avoid the seizure of the planes in connection with Western sanctions.

Media blockade

Russia blocked at least 10 independent news outlets over the weekend after President Vladimir Putin signed into law jail terms of up to 15 years for publishing "fake news" about the Russian army.

Foreign outlets including CNN, BBC and Bloomberg News have suspended broadcasting and news gathering inside Russia in order to evaluate the law and its consequences for reporting.

Business exodus

International companies including Visa, Mastercard, TikTok, Netflix, Spotify, Puma, Adobe and Booking.com joined the business freeze-out of operations in Russia.

Major corporations across a range of industries have halted business in Russia since its invasion began on Feb. 24, including everything from U.S.-based tech firms such as Intel and Airbnb to French luxury giants LVMH, Hermes and Chanel.

In the crosshairs

U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and WNBA champion, has been detained in Moscow on accusations of carrying vape cartridges that contained cannabis oil in her luggage.

A statement on Saturday from the Russian Federal Customs Service announcing her arrest said an expert had determined that the liquid was the narcotic cannabis oil (hashish oil) and said the charges carry a potential jail term of five to 10 years.

Church endorsement

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church endorsed Putin's narrative for the invasion of Ukraine during a Forgiveness Sunday sermon.

"There have been attempts to destroy what has existed in the Donbas [the separatist-controlled region of eastern Ukraine] for eight years: a fundamental rejection of so-called values that those who seek world domination are offering today," Patriarch Kirill said.

"There's a loyalty test to this power... it's very simple and terrible: it's a gay pride parade," he

argued. "We know that if people or countries reject these demands, they become strangers to that world."

AFP contributed reporting.

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