

Russia Says Foiled Attempted Smuggling of Radioactive Material

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A Russian Federal Security Service vehicle. [Vitaly Nevar / TASS](#)

Russia's domestic intelligence agency has detained five people suspected of trying to smuggle a dangerous radioactive isotope out of Russia, claiming the group planned to incriminate Moscow in a false-flag attack on Ukraine, state media [reported](#) Friday.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) said the five unnamed individuals — “acting in coordination with a Ukrainian citizen” — were caught illegally purchasing 1 kilogram of Cesium-137 for \$3.5 million “in the interests of a foreign customer.”

Exposure to Cesium-137 — which is commonly used in mining operations — can cause serious illness and even death.

“The purpose for smuggling the radioactive substance from Russia abroad [was to] use it against Russian interests during the ‘special military operation’,” the FSB said, using the Kremlin’s preferred term for its invasion of Ukraine.

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Law enforcement officials claimed the five individuals had sought to "conduct a propaganda campaign" by staging a false-flag operation with "weapons of mass destruction."

It was not possible to independently verify the claims.

Video released by the FSB's press service [showed](#) surveillance footage of several men carrying a metal safe from an auto repair shop into a vehicle, after which they were detained by masked FSB agents.

One of the detainees shown in the video identified himself as a citizen of Russia, Ukraine and the self-proclaimed Donetsk people's republic.

Russia's Interior Ministry has initiated criminal cases into the misuse of and preparations to smuggle nuclear and radioactive materials over the incident.

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