

Russia Says Seized EU-Bound Cocaine Haul Worth Millions

By [AFP](#)

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Russia said Friday it had arrested suspected members of a Colombian cartel trying to smuggle tens of millions of dollars worth of cocaine into Europe.

The suspects were caught loading 570 kilograms (1,250 pounds) of the illegal substance into a container intended for shipment to the European Union, according to Russia's FSB security service.

The FSB suggested the smugglers brought the drugs into Russia from Peru hidden in a vehicle, and that they were members of Colombia's infamous Cali cartel.

"Five hundred and seventy kilograms of cocaine were seized, the wholesale value of which on the Russian black market is 1.5 billion rubles, the retail value exceeding 5.5 billion rubles [\$55 million]," the FSB said in a statement on its website.

Colombia is the world's biggest cocaine producer and exporter, mainly to the United States and Europe.

Last year, the South American country set a new record for cocaine production and cultivation of the coca leaf the drug is made from.

Russia has a zero-tolerance policy towards drug use and smuggling, handing heavy sentences to those convicted of trafficking small amounts of narcotics.

Russian customs seized almost three tons of cocaine in the first nine months of the year, according to authorities.

The Cali cartel controlled up to 80% of the cocaine trade to the United States at its peak in the mid-1990s, according to US authorities.

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