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St. Petersburg Police Probe Security Guards After Suspected Shoplifter Dies of Asphyxiation

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A still image from a bystander video in which the young man can be heard shouting for help and saying he cannot breathe. **@astrapress / Telegram**

Two shopping mall security guards in St. Petersburg are reportedly being investigated for manslaughter following the death of a suspected shoplifter they grabbed and pressed to the ground for several minutes as he said he could not breathe.

Local media reported that the suspected shoplifter, identified as 24-year-old Dmitry, was pinned to the ground on Wednesday evening by security guards at a Perekryostok supermarket.

The young man's death was captured in bystander videos in which he could be heard shouting for help and saying that he could not breathe.

Surveillance footage at the Perekryostok, located inside City Mall in northern St. Petersburg,

showed he had used pepper spray against the security guards chasing after him before he was grabbed.

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On Friday, the local branch of the Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, said security guards involved in the altercation were being investigated for manslaughter after an autopsy determined that the cause of the young man's death was asphyxiation.

The law enforcement body said it would soon press formal charges, but it did not indicate how many security guards were arrested in connection with the investigation.

The St. Petersburg news outlet Fontanka reported that police arrested two security guards, whose ages were given as 64 and 19. An 18-year-old janitor at a fast-food restaurant in City Mall was also said to have been brought in for questioning, though it was unclear if he could face any charges.

Fontanka reported that surveillance footage showed a third security guard, a 32-year-old man, fleeing the mall through a staff exit before the police arrived on Wednesday. The news outlet said the man was believed to have been involved in pinning the suspected shoplifter to the ground and holding him there.

Following the death, St. Petersburg police reportedly launched surprise inspections of all Perekryostok supermarkets in the city, uncovering dozens of immigration violations at a warehouse of its parent company, X5 Group.

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