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Russia Targets Armenian Cognac and Wine in Latest Trade Curbs on Yerevan

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Vedi Alco / YouTube

Russia has suspended the sale of several Armenian alcoholic products, widening a series of trade restrictions that come amid increasingly strained relations between Moscow and Yerevan, Russia's consumer safety watchdog said.

Rospotrebnadzor said Friday that it had identified Armenian alcohol products circulating in Russia that failed to meet mandatory requirements and ordered sales to be halted. The agency did not specify which standards had allegedly been violated.

The measure is the latest in a series of restrictions on Armenian goods introduced as relations between Moscow and Yerevan deteriorate. Days earlier, Russia's agricultural watchdog announced temporary curbs on all flower imports originating from or transiting through Armenia.

Rospotrebnadzor said the restrictions applied to products made by Armenian producers Vedi-Alco, the Abovyan Brandy Factory and the Shakhnazaryan Wine and Brandy House.

Products listed by the agency included Getap Vernashen semi-sweet red wine and Vedi Alco dry white wine from the Legends ARNI line, Armenian Cognac 5 Stars and seven-year-old Shakhnazaryan XO cognac.

Related article: Russia Restricts Armenian Flower Imports Amid Strained Relations

The watchdog said it had instructed importers and retailers to suspend sales and withdraw the products from circulation.

The announcement followed a similar measure a day earlier against Armenian mineral water brand Jermuk. Russian authorities imposed a full ban on its imports and sale, citing excessive levels of bicarbonates, chlorides and sulfates.

Rospotrebnadzor said consumers could be misled about the product's medicinal properties, which it said could result in ineffective treatment and worsening health outcomes.

The restrictions come against the backdrop of deteriorating relations between Russia and Armenia, once one of Moscow's closest allies in the South Caucasus.

Russian officials have accused Armenia of taking what they describe as "unfriendly steps," including following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's participation in a summit of the European Political Community attended by Armenian leaders.

State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin has publicly criticized Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan over Armenia's decision to begin the process of seeking EU membership and for recognizing the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, which issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin.

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu has also accused Armenia of deliberately worsening conditions for Russian businesses operating in the country.

Putin has warned Armenia to consider the consequences of pursuing closer integration with Europe, invoking Ukraine as an example and suggesting that Yerevan should first hold a referendum on leaving the Eurasian Economic Union if it wished to part ways with Moscow "softly, intelligently and mutually beneficially."

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