

Montenegro Arrests Founder of Influential Russian Pro-War Blog Rybar

October 09, 2026



Mikhail Zvinchuk. **Rutube**

Authorities in Montenegro have arrested Mikhail Zvinchuk, the founder of the influential pro-war Russian Telegram channel Rybar, in an operation targeting suspected Russian influence activities, officials confirmed Friday.

The U.S. State Department is [offering](#) up to \$10 million for information leading to the identification or location of Zvinchuk, a former Russian Defense Ministry press officer, and other Rybar staff over their alleged involvement in election interference and malign influence operations.

Montenegro's police and National Security Agency (ANB) carried out the operation targeting "hybrid activities" by Russian information networks, security sources [told](#) the news outlet Vijesti.

Those detained include Zvinchuk's wife, Rybar creative director Valeria Zvinchuk and with three associates, the outlet reported.

Montenegro's Prime Minister Milojko Spajić, whose government is [seeking](#) to bring Montenegro into the European Union by 2028, [confirmed](#) Zvinchuk's detention.

"Montenegro is protecting its interests and no one will endanger our European future," Spajić wrote on X.

Related article: [Pro-War Blogger 'Thirteenth' Arrested for Inciting Hatred, Telegram Channel Claims](#)

Intelligence agencies had monitored the group for several days after its arrival in Montenegro to film material about the Balkan country's alignment with EU visa policies, the Russian news outlet Readovka [reported](#).

Authorities suspected the material was intended to undermine Montenegro's tourism industry, economy and national interests, according to the report.

Unconfirmed [reporting](#) by the Russian Telegram news channel Baza claimed that officers detained Zvinchuk at 7:30 a.m. local time at the Mövenpick Hotel in Risan. It said the group was taken to Podgorica for questioning and their phones and passports were confiscated.

Rybar [said](#) its team was in Montenegro legally to film a local monastery and that it expected their prompt release.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [said](#) the Russian Embassy in Podgorica was working to establish the circumstances of the detention.

Rybar has about 1.5 million Telegram subscribers and publishes daily military analysis of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Zvinchuk is subject to Western sanctions.

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