

Government Adds 'Spice' Smoking Blends to List of Banned Substances

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Smoking mixtures, commonly sold as synthetic marijuana or "spice," have been made illegal in Russia after the government added them to the list of banned narcotic and psychotropic substances.

Until now, smoking mixtures have been sold legally in stores and distributed via the Internet as a type of medicine or household chemical, a statement on the Cabinet's website said.

But the uncontrolled non-medical use of smoking mixtures, which are considered psychostimulants, constitutes a threat to public health, the Cabinet said.

"Taking into consideration that the new psychoactive substances ... are not included in the list of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances and their precursors to be monitored, limiting their sale in the Russian Federation has been difficult," the Cabinet said Monday.

But the new resolution means that the punishment for the distribution and use of the drug will carry the same weight as light drugs.

The document was prepared and sponsored by the Federal Drug Control Service, which conducted a raid to combat the distribution of the drug back in March.

The absence of the drug on the list of banned substances up until now allowed several Internet stores to flourish, with many suppliers in Southeast Asia shipping the synthetic designer drug to Russia.

Street peddlers have also been known to sell the drug by handing out flyers advertising a seemingly harmless "smoking mixture" outside Moscow's metro stations.

On Jan. 31, the Federal Drug Control Service announced that it had conducted a sweep of synthetic marijuana dealers, shutting down 55 points of sale, seizing 3,000 packets and detaining 30 people.

Federal Drug Control Service head Viktor Ivanov said after the raid that a compound found in most of the confiscated packets was "quinolin-8-yl 1-pentyl-1H-indole-3-carboxylate," a name he said symbolized the near-endless potential of synthesizing new compounds to circumvent anti-drug laws.

Considering the endless possibilities of synthesizing new compounds, it is not clear whether the recent addition of "smoking mixtures" to the list of banned substances will eradicate the problem.

Synthetic marijuana has also been sold in the guise of other household substances in the past, such as bath salts or even fish food, meaning producers may simply go to greater lengths to mask what they are selling.

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