

# Russian security service conducts raids on Church of Scientology. Calls Scientology: “international scam”.

Federal Security Service raid over a dozen locations in Moscow and St Petersburg as part of investigation into alleged illegal business dealings



AFP in Moscow

Russia’s security service has raided over a dozen locations linked to the Church of [Scientology](#) in the latest step of a long-running battle between authorities and the US-based organisation.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) said officers “conducted simultaneous searches” at 14 addresses in Moscow and St Petersburg as part of an apparent investigation into alleged illegal business dealings by the Church of [Scientology](#) in Russia’s second city.

“Objects and documents were found and seized that proved the version of the investigators about the marketing functions for goods and services of the Church of Scientology of Saint Petersburg in violation of the law,” a statement carried by Russian news agencies said.

Last November [a Russian court banned the activities of the Moscow branch of the Church of Scientology](#) after authorities argued in part that since it had registered its name as a US trademark, it cannot call itself a religious organisation.

Russia’s justice ministry has long been pushing to prohibit the organisation, which some countries treat as a legitimate faith but others consider to be a cult.

The ruling last year by a Moscow city court came after a lower-level district court rejected the church’s appeal against a justice ministry’s decision not to register it as a religious organisation.

The Russian justice ministry registers religious organisations as well as NGOs, a requirement for them to operate.

Last August, Moscow investigators said separately that they had opened a criminal inquiry after finding hidden microphones and cameras in the Moscow church's premises.

The Scientology church was founded in the United States in 1954 by science-fiction writer L Ron Hubbard and was accorded the status of religion there in 1993.

The European Court of Human Rights has several times ruled in favour of the church, saying that [Russia](#) violated its rights by refusing to register its churches in various regions.

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