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## **Administrator of a group of death in social media affecting at least 20 teenagers detained in Moscow Region**



In May 2016, investigators of the Saint Petersburg Directorate of the Investigative Committee checked reports published by some media and containing information about closed groups in one of popular social media which allegedly inclined teenagers to commit suicides. Soon after that, they opened an investigation in solicitation to suicide (Part 4 of Article 33, Article 110 of the RF Penal Code).

The investigators now have information that in the period of time from December 2013 to May 2016, culprits set up eight virtual communities in social networking site VK (VKontakte) openly promoting suicides and pushed teenage users to suicidal behavior. The access to those groups was strictly limited reminding of membership in a closed club and was granted by administrators of the group. At the next stage, newly-made members had to take different tests pushing up their rating which opened access to new “capabilities”: content and tests related to death, suicide, self-harming and staging such events. To confirm that they were “successful”, teenagers sent to the administrators, who enjoyed unquestionable authority, drawings, texts, photographs of cuts they had done to themselves and suchlike. It should be mentioned, that consistent influence on children was helped by

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efficient mental and emotional tactics as some of the tests were to be taken at night leading to teenagers not getting enough sleep, feeling unwell, getting their will and analytical capacities oppressed, not being able to treat the situation in reasonable or adequate way.

A teenager who joined the group to take part in an exciting game and taking interesting and at first site innocent tests got in a powerful mental trap. The death was promoted as the only right and beautiful way to get out of difficult situations. Depression, self harming and using violence against those around were cultivated while unshakable universal values such as family, friends, and education were criticized, mocked at and devalued. Balancing between virtual and real life, teenagers projected what was happening on the screen to their lives taking it as something natural, routine and normal, while the administrators of the groups were keeping their eyes on the ball forcing teenagers to take more and more sophisticated tests. The investigators have established that those who refused to take the tests, were expelled from the group immediately. Each of the members valued their rating so much, that they were not able to argue with virtual authorities and were forced to take dangerous tests up to committing suicide.

By now the investigators have identified 15 victims – teenagers who were members of groups of death and have committed suicides in different regions of Russia. Five more have not succeeded. According to results of a psychological and linguistic inquiry, messages sent by the administrators of the group contain solicitation to suicide promoting deformation of the instinct of self-preservation and devaluation of death.

Best investigators were dispatched to investigate the case and did their best to track down the culprits as soon as possible. Following the steps, which are not to be disclosed in the interest of the probe, the investigators with operative support from agents of the Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service have just held in Moscow Region the first suspect, the administrator of one of groups of death Filipp Budeikin, registered online as Filipp Lis (Fox) and living in the town of Solnechnogorsk, Moscow Region. Soon the investigators are going to ask courts to arrest the young man. As has been established the said group of death acted solely via VK social networking site, the managers of which failed to do enough to block the group and break up the interaction of its administrators with its members, the investigators believe.

At present, the investigators are carrying out searches in 10 regions of Russia – Krasnodar territory, Komi Republic and Bashkortostan, Moscow, Volgograd, Voronezh, Tula, Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Omsk Regions. They are searching residences of administrators and members of the group of death registered as Filipp Lis, Filipp More (Sea), Miron Stekh, Keeper of the Truth, and others. They are confiscating their electronic data carriers and other materials relevant for the probe, questioning witnesses and injured parties. We are doing everything to prevent such events. The Investigative Committee has set up an interagency working group for prevention of suicide-related information on the internet. On the order of the Investigative Committee's Chairman we are developing a set of preventing steps to protect teenagers against criminal influence, which include introduction of criminal liability for pushing to commit suicide.

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Acting Head of Media Relations S.L. Petrenko

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