

Canada Revokes Spy Suspect's Passport

July 27, 2010

The  Moscow Times

TORONTO — Canada has revoked the passport of a suspected Russian spy who fled after being freed on bail in Cyprus, a passport department spokeswoman said.

Veronique Robitaille said Passport Canada canceled the travel document issued to Christopher Metsos, the accused paymaster of a Russian espionage ring.

Cypriot officials confirmed earlier this month that Metsos had assumed the identity of a dead 5-year-old Canadian boy to obtain a passport.

"Where Passport Canada is informed that an individual may have provided false or misleading information to obtain a passport, or may have misused a passport, we review the matter and take appropriate action," Robitaille said Monday.

Canadian officials said they learned the details of Metsos' false identity from Renata Wielgosz, Canada's ambassador to Cyprus and Greece.

Metsos was among 11 people — four of whom claimed to be Canadian — indicted on charges of conspiring to act as secret agents in the United States on behalf of the Foreign Intelligence

Service, or SVR.

The 10 arrested in the United States were sent back to Moscow after pleading guilty, part of a swap for prisoners in Russia.

But Metsos, arrested June 29, skipped bail in Cyprus and has not surfaced since.

Until now, Canadian officials have said little about the spy caper that grabbed headlines around the world and rekindled memories of Cold War cloak-and-dagger intrigue.

It remains unclear how Metsos — described by the FBI as "a secret SVR agent who is based abroad" — was able to obtain a Canadian passport.

Robitaille declined to elaborate on the agency's review process concerning this case.

In court documents, the FBI said Metsos often traveled to the United States to meet with agents and pay them on behalf of Moscow.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service director Dick Fadden told a parliamentary committee this month that foreign spies value the Canadian passport.

"I think one of the reasons that Canada's so attractive is that we're so well-viewed around the world, and our passports are accepted virtually anywhere," he said.

Meanwhile, Cyprus said Tuesday that it would turn over to U.S. authorities a confiscated laptop and other items belonging to Metsos.

Cypriot Justice Minister Loucas Louca said he would agree to a U.S. request for the laptop, three USB memory sticks and a digital camera.

Louca said the handover will go ahead after Cypriot Attorney General Petros Clerides advised that information Cypriot police retrieved from the items legally warrants their transfer to U.S. authorities.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/07/27/canada-revokes-spy-suspects-passport-a158>