The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Fighter Who Fled Mental Hospital Detained in Norway

By Alexander Bratersky

September 22, 2010



Vyacheslav Datsik posing at a mixed martial arts championship in Belorechensk in the Krasnodar region in 2006.

A mixed martial arts champion who fled a St. Petersburg psychiatric facility has been detained in Norway after applying for asylum.

An Oslo police official said Vyacheslav Datsik was detained Wednesday on suspicion of violating the country's law on gun ownership and having possible links to organized crime. He spoke on condition of anonymity, saying he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Datsik, also known as Tarzan the Redhead, surrendered to immigration officials earlier Wednesday and asked for political asylum, Interfax reported.

A video posted on YouTube shows Datsik entering a building described only as a Norwegian immigration office. The police official said it was an immigration police office.

Dmitry Dyomushkin, a friend of Datsik and leader of the banned ultranationalist Slavic Union, confirmed the authenticity of the video, saying it had been filmed by supporters in Norway.

“I wished him all the best and told him not to act like a nutcase,” Dyomushkin said by telephone.

The video shows Datsik, 30, wearing a sweatshirt with Nazi insignia and saying, "Sieg heil," as he raises his arm in a Nazi salute before entering the office.

Once inside, Datsik, speaking through an interpreter, tells an immigration official that he arrived in the country by boat and gives her the pistol and his driver's license. He also asks the official to google his name.

Last year, Datsik, a world heavyweight champion in mixed martial arts, was found guilty by a St. Petersburg court of carrying out several robberies. But he was sent to a prison psychiatric hospital after a psychological examination deemed him insane.

Datsik was transferred in July to a regular psychiatric facility in the Leningrad region, which he fled on Aug. 21, reportedly tearing a hole in the wire fence with his bare hands. Police have linked him to the robbery of 7,000 rubles ($225) and a cell phone from a local cell phone shop the next day.

A St. Petersburg police spokesman said Wednesday that Datsik is wanted by federal authorities on robbery charges but no Interpol warrant has been issued for his arrest, Interfax reported.

A spokesman for local branch of the Federal Guard Service said by telephone that his agency was not aware of the case. He said, though, that if Datsik had crossed the Russian border illegally, he could have gone through the Murmansk region, which borders Norway, or Karelia, which borders Finland. Illegal border crossing is punished by up to two years' imprisonment.

Datsik told Interfax that he would seek asylum in Norway, a longtime favorite destination for Chechens who fled Russia during the Chechen conflicts. Among those who have asylum is Anzor Maskhadov, son of late Chechen rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov.

Ksenya Nelson, a lawyer with the Andersen & Bache-Wiig AS law firm in Oslo, said asylum seekers must prove that they are being harassed by the authorities. "His political views are not a matter,” she said, adding that it has gotten more difficult for Russians to obtain asylum in Norway nowadays.

Norwegian immigration officials were unavailable for comment, but a spokesman for the Justice Ministry said government policy barred the release of information about asylum cases, a precaution meant to ensure the safety of applicants.

Despite his psychological evaluation, Datsik is a "sane person," Dyomushkin said.

Stanislav Bukhlov, a boxing promoter who knows Datsik, agreed, saying Datsik just liked attention.

“I remember when we visited a private zoo, he tried to get into a cage with a bear, saying that wrestling with wild animals was always a challenge for him," Bukhlov said by telephone. "Other people were in panic, trying to stop him. But if he had been all alone at the zoo, I don't think he would have done anything like that."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/09/22/fighter-who-fled-mental-hospital-detained-in-norway-a1648