

Wife and Son of Detained 'Spy' Lash Out at Tbilisi

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

November 11, 2010

The  Moscow Times

The relatives of a retired Russian police officer arrested on spying charges in Georgia accused Tbilisi authorities on Thursday of denying him a fair trial.

Yury Skrylnikov, 63, was sentenced in October by a court in Batumi to 18 years in prison on money-counterfeiting charges.

Afterward, the Georgian Interior Ministry [accused](#) him of being a liaison officer for a spy ring working for the General Staff's intelligence service, known as GRU.

The ministry last Friday paraded 13 members of the ring, whom it accused of gathering classified information about Georgia's armed forces.

Skrylnikov, who is from a village in the southern Stavropol region, is one of four Russian citizens among the group.

His wife and son said Thursday that Skrylnikov was "a simple Russian pensioner" who had traveled to Georgia to visit relatives.

"The accusations are all untrue and made up — and we do not know by whom," his wife, Lyubov Skrylnikova, told reporters.

She complained that relatives had been barred from visiting Skrylnikov since he was detained in May, just a day after entering Georgia on a shuttle bus from Russia.

"My father is guilty of nothing. He is very sick, has very poor eyesight and cannot see more than one meter," his son Ruslan told the same Moscow news conference.

He said his father was born near Batumi and served in the Georgian port city's police force until the Soviet collapse. After 1991, he worked as an investigator in the Stavropol police and retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Repeated calls to the Georgian Interior and Foreign ministries went unanswered Thursday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Nino Kalandadze said earlier this week that Tbilisi was ready for talks with Moscow over the jailed Russians, but Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rejected this. "We won't negotiate. This is a provocation," he told reporters Wednesday, Interfax reported.

The Georgian Foreign Ministry confirmed late Wednesday that it had received a Russian request for more information on the suspects, Interfax reported, citing local media.

Andrei Soldatov, a security analyst who heads the Agentura.ru think tank, said Tbilisi was trying to gain political clout by suggesting direct talks with Moscow. "They want to appear to be on par, and that is precisely why Russia will not allow any negotiations," he said by telephone.

The two countries severed diplomatic ties after the short war over South Ossetia in 2008. Russian and Georgian authorities have claimed in the past to have uncovered spies for the other country, but the case involving Skrylnikov boasts the largest number of arrests.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/11/11/wife-and-son-of-detained-spy-lash-out-at-tbilisi-a2911>