

Russian Aide in U.K. Parliament Spy Flap

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The  Moscow Times

LONDON — A member of the House of Commons Defense Committee said Sunday that his Russian assistant is facing deportation as a suspected spy.

Mike Hancock said he was unaware that the security services had any suspicions about his aide, Yekaterina Zatuliveter, 25, until she was detained.

Hancock, 64, is a member of the House of Commons Defense Committee, and the European Security and Defense Assembly of the Western European Union, a security and defense organization. He is a Liberal Democrat, the junior party in the Conservative-led government.

In October, The Sunday Times reported that Home Secretary Theresa May had already approved Zatuliveter's detention. The Home Office declined to comment, saying it never comments on individual cases.

"She is not a Russian spy. I know nothing about espionage, but she has been subjected to a deportation order," Hancock said. "She is appealing it because she feels, quite rightly, that she has done nothing wrong."

The Sunday Times said Zatuliveter was stopped and questioned at Gatwick Airport in August when she returned to Britain.

Hancock said the security services had never told him of their concerns about Zatuliveter.

"No one has ever said to me under any circumstances whatsoever that she has been involved in anything like that," he said. "It is now in the hands of her lawyers. I am sure that in the end she will be proved to be right."

Hancock said Zatuliveter had been a full-time researcher in his office for 2 1/2 years and earlier had worked there as an intern.

"As far as I am concerned, there was nothing she was doing for me that was sensitive. Defense Select Committee papers have been leaked to newspapers before now, and I have never read anything in a Defense Select Committee paper or report which was worth someone believing they couldn't get from another source," Hancock said in an interview with the BBC.

He said her work included hosting constituents visiting parliament, writing speeches and working on early day motions, which serve as expressions of lawmakers' opinions.

"Katya was ambitious, she had ideas to go a lot further than just working for an MP in the House of Commons," Hancock said.

Other legislators were cautious in commenting on the case.

Yvette Cooper, the opposition Labor Party's spokeswoman on foreign affairs, said she knew nothing at Zatuliveter's case.

"Depending on what happens in this individual case, if there do turn out to be problems and breaches of security here, then obviously the wider security in parliament would need to be looked at," Cooper said.

Conservative lawmaker Iain Duncan Smith said he had never met the woman.

"Trouble is, I would say normally this would be a joke but actually after what's been going on with some of the spies that Russia seems to have put into all sorts of places, you have to take it quite seriously really I suppose," Duncan Smith said in an interview with Sky News.

In July, the government revoked the British citizenship of Anna Chapman, who was among 10 people who pleaded guilty in the United States to procuring information for a foreign government.

Chapman had lived in Britain for four years, but had gone to the United States after divorcing her British husband. She and the others were sent to Russia in a swap for four Russians accused of spying for the West.

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