

Cold Baths, Tabasco Spark Adoption Flap

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Russian authorities are considering canceling the adoption of a 7-year-old boy from Magadan whose U.S. parents said they punished him by dousing him with cold water and forcing him to drink spicy Tabasco sauce.

Moreover, U.S. authorities have opened a child abuse case against Jessica Bigley of Anchorage, Alaska, for her treatment of Daniil Bukharov, adopted in 2008 along with his twin brother, Oleg. If convicted in the U.S. case, Bigley faces up to a year in prison.

A video of the boy being punished by an exasperated and sometimes screaming Jessica Bigley was aired on the television talk show "Dr. Phil" in November (see above). The video, available on YouTube, shows Bigley calling the boy "the biggest stress of my life."

Bigley is an elementary school teacher and her husband, Harry, works as a police officer specializing in child abuse investigations.

Children ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said he would seek criminal charges against the adoptive parents, whom he called "monsters," and that the boys might be removed from the family for the duration of the investigation.

"This is not strictness but real torture, the abuse of a child," Astakhov said, Interfax reported.

He said a moratorium should be imposed on U.S. adoptions until a bilateral agreement is signed. Astakhov and the Foreign Ministry called for a moratorium last year after a U.S. mother sent her adopted son back to Russia unaccompanied on a plane.

Natalya Zelenskaya, head of the department in the Magadan Mayor's Office that handles adoptions, said Daniil Bukharov's case was under review and his adoption might be annulled, Interfax reported.

A representative of the U.S. agency that helped the Bigleys adopt the twins said the Russian consul would visit the boys Tuesday together with representatives from the adoption agency. The representative, Zoya Krainova, also suggested that the video showing the boy being forced to drink what appears to be Tabasco sauce and to take a cold shower was staged at the request of the show's producers.

The Bigleys adopted Daniil and Oleg from a Magadan orphanage in 2008, Interfax reported.

At the time, Jessica told a local television station that she loved the twins even before she saw them in person, and her husband said he and his wife wanted to "share what we have" with the "deprived" boys.

The Bigleys have four biological children in addition to the twins.

Bukharov's case could be considered relatively mild compared with several other instances in which U.S. parents severely beat or even tortured their adopted children to death. Fifteen Russian children died in adoptive families in the United States between 1996 and 2008. In all but one case, the parents faced criminal charges.

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