

Peruvian From Spy Scandal Back Home

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LIMA, Peru — A Peruvian journalist deported by the United States to Russia in a spy swap returned home to attend her father's burial Saturday.

Vicky Pelaez was not accompanied by husband Mikhail Vasenkov, whom she met in Peru in the 1980s when he was living as Juan Lazaro. The couple was arrested last June by U.S. authorities along with eight other people accused of being Russian spies.

All 10 were sent to Russia in July in exchange for the release by Moscow of four people convicted of spying for the West.

"I am not going to speak ill of either the United States or Russia," Pelaez told reporters after attending her father's funeral in the highlands city of Cuzco. "That country [Russia] was able to get me out of that hole and is fulfilling its promise to give me a pension, with which I am supporting my son."

Peruvian prosecutors have said the 55-year-old Pelaez apparently altered her birth and marriage records and said that if she returned to Peru she could be detained.

The Associated Press was not immediately able to reach authorities for comment on Pelaez's legal status.

Pelaez was a longtime columnist for the newspaper El Diario La Prensa in New York and was known as a fervent defender of Cuba's Fidel Castro when she was arrested.

Both Pelaez and Vasenkov, 65, pleaded guilty in the United States to conspiring to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign country.

The two disappeared from public view and Pelaez's return to Peru on Friday brought her back into the limelight.

Peru's foreign minister had warned after the two were deported by the United States that Vasenkov could be charged with lying on his Peruvian citizenship application if he were to return to Peru.

Lawyers for the couple had said at the time that the pair planned to return to Peru.

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