

Austrian Spy Gets Suspended Sentence

March 03, 2011

The  Moscow Times

A German court has given a one-year suspended prison sentence to an Austrian soldier who admitted to spying for Russia, marking the end of a 2007 espionage scandal that strained relations between Vienna and Moscow.

Harald Sodnikar, a helicopter technician in Austria's armed forces, accepted Tuesday's ruling but maintained that he did not divulge any military secrets, local media reported Thursday.

"The German judiciary was seemingly offended that Austria let go the Russian I had been in contact with, despite their extradition request," Sodnikar said in an [interview](#) with the Oberösterreichische Nachrichten daily.

The court in Munich ruled that Sodnikar, 54, had helped an agent of the Foreign Intelligence Service, or SVR, to obtain technical documentation about Eurocopter helicopters.

But the SVR seemingly failed to get valuable military information like documents about Eurocopter's Tiger combat helicopter.

"No military secrets were divulged &mdash but industrial espionage might also harm national

interests," the newspaper quoted Judge Manfred Götzl as saying.

The agent, Vladimir Vozhzhov, was based as a trade attache at the Russian Embassy in Vienna in the late 1990s and later worked at the Federal Space Agency.

In 2007, Austrian police, acting on a German arrest warrant, arrested Vozhzhov in Salzburg. But he was released and returned to Moscow a week later.

Vozhzhov's release was officially explained with the fact that a United Nations inquiry found he had diplomatic immunity, but speculation lingered that Moscow had pressured the Austrian government.

Sodnikar acted as a middleman between Vozhzhov and Werner Greipl, a former Eurocopter engineer, who in 2008 was convicted and given a suspended sentence for selling helicopter plans to a Russian agent.

Austrian prosecutors dropped their case against Sodnikar but the country's military might open a disciplinary hearing against the warrant officer, the reports said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/03/03/austrian-spy-gets-suspended-sentence-a5395>