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U.S. Jury Sees Mother Feed Hot Sauce to Adopted Son

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Hot sauce is a dinner table option to some parents. But to U.S. prosecutors, forcing it on a 7-year-old Russian boy as punishment amounts to child abuse.

In a case that has drawn Russian attention, Alaskan jurors on Wednesday watched a video showing U.S. mother Jessica Beagley squirting hot sauce in the mouth of her adopted son. Her attorney said it was punishment for misbehaving at school and lying about it to his mother.

The footage, along with audio of the boy screaming as he's forced to stand in a cold shower, was shown as part of Beagley's trial on misdemeanor child abuse charges in Anchorage on Wednesday.

Prosecutors say Beagley went beyond what would be considered reasonable parental discipline with her adopted son Daniil Bukharov. Her lawyer, William Ingaldson, said she resorted to unconventional disciplinary methods because more traditional forms of punishment had not worked with the boy.

Beagley, along with her police officer husband, adopted Daniil and his twin brother from a Russian orphanage after their parents abandoned them, Ingaldson said. The boys were taken there after Russian investigators found their family living in a shack, where the boys slept on shelves in a wardrobe, he said.

The brothers were adopted when they were 5 from an orphanage in the city of Magadan.

The couple "thought this was their chance to make a difference in kids' lives," Ingaldson said. The couple also has four biological children.

The case has prompted protests from Russian authorities.

Anchorage police were notified about the case after "Dr. Phil" viewers saw the footage, which was submitted as a nine-minute video for a November episode titled "Mommy Confessions." "Dr. Phil" is a talk show on self-improvement.

The video, made in October 2010, shows Beagley asking the boy what happens when he lies.

"I get hot sauce," the crying boy replies.

The video shows Beagley putting hot sauce in the boy's mouth and telling him not to spit it out. When he admits to lying, she allows him to spit out the hot sauce.

She then explains to the child that he is going to get in a cold shower for lying about misbehavior at school: wriggling in his seat and sword-fighting with pencils.

The video did not show the child in the shower, but the boy's screams can be heard.

"Listen to your teacher," she says. "You are to do what you are told."

(AP, MT)

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