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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Arm-Wrestling Champ Detained at Sheremetyevo

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Police have detained an international arm-wrestling champion who managed to evade murder charges for more than 20 years, the Interior Ministry said Wednesday.

Dzhambul Vibliani was detained on arrival at Sheremetyevo Airport earlier this month after being deported by U.S. authorities because his visa had expired, the ministry said on its web site.

Vibliani, 41, is accused of stabbing a person to death in a brawl in Tbilisi in 1990 and was subsequently put on an international arrest warrant by Georgian police.

He is also sought as a suspect in the killing of a driver in 1999, the ministry said, without giving any further details about the two cases.

It was not clear Wednesday whether Vibliani would be charged in Russia or extradited to Georgia.

Vibliani escaped attention by obtaining a Russian passport under the name of Roman Tsindeliani, and he settled in the Urals city of Perm, where he became a celebrity arm wrestler.

According to the ministry, he won the sport's world championship 12 times.

A Channel One television report about the case that aired Wednesday night showed Tsindeliani shortly after his arrest at the airport complaining that he was the victim of a mix-up by investigators. “It is absolutely no problem to find me anywhere — I am a 12-time world champion,” he said.

Tsindeliani moved last year to New Jersey, where he continued his career, winning seven weight classes against some of the best arm wrestlers in the world, Worldofarmwrestling.com said.

According to a report by his supporters, Tsindeliani was arrested by the U.S. immigration service in April on accusations of carrying a forged identity. He later agreed to being deported to Russia.

Apart from videos of some of his biggest fights, Tsindeliani's supporters have set up a special site for their idol at Freetheworldchamp.com.

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