Man Jailed for Year Under Fake Name

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A man somehow spent a year in a prison colony under the wrong name, authorities admitted Tuesday, raising troubling questions about shoddy prison record-keeping.

The St. Petersburg ombudsman's office said the man was sentenced in 2010 under an assumed family name and that his true identity wasn't revealed until after he'd spent a year behind bars.

The man, a native of St. Petersburg whose identity was not disclosed, was given a three-year term for theft in the Arkhangelsk prison colony, ombudsman Lyubov Anisimova told The Moscow Times on Tuesday.

While the man was actually guilty of the crime, Anisimova said he had written several letters to her office starting in August asking for help in clarifying his status.

Officials at the Arkhangelsk prison colony ultimately confirmed the man's real identity using his true identification documents and fingerprint card.

Anisimova said she was confused about the details of the case, saying both of the man's

family names — real and invented — were used in the case.

"That shows that there are problems in the whole system," she said.

The St. Petersburg ombudsman's office said in a statement that a repeat of a similar situation in another case could lead to the "sentencing of individuals who have not committed crimes."

Officials in the St. Petersburg city prosecutor's office, which handled the case, were not available for a comment Tuesday.

The ombudsman's office said in the statement that prosecutors had given the case back to the investigators, using the man's real name.

It is unclear why the inmate hid his real identity, but the Russian justice system has seen cases where people convicted of minor crimes try to keep their real names secret in order to hide more serious crimes.

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