

Kremlin Knocks U.S. for 'Silence' on Adopted Child's Death

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The United States "inexcusably" failed to inform Moscow about the death of a Russian-born toddler adopted by an American couple, a Kremlin official said Friday, highlighting tensions over an adoption accord that the two countries signed in July.

Russia's children's rights commissioner Pavel Astakhov criticized U.S. authorities for not informing Russia that an American man had been acquitted of the murder of his Russian-born son.

In November, a jury in U.S. state Iowa decided that Brian Dykstra was not guilty of second-degree murder following the death of his 21-month year old son Isaac in 2005, U.S. news reports said.

"The American authorities have only now informed us [of this case]. For almost six years they were silent and said nothing. It is inexcusable," Astakhov said in an interview.

A U.S. official who did not wish to be named said Friday that they were preparing a response

to Astakhov's remarks.

The adoption of tens of thousands of Russian children by foreigners since the collapse of the Soviet Union 20 years ago has been a touchy subject since Russia opened up to would-be Western parents.

Cases of abuse among Russian-born children in the United States have outraged both politicians and the public alike in Russia.

In August, Astakhov criticized the suspended sentence handed to an Alaskan mother seen on a U.S. television program after she punished her 7-year-old son by making him swallow hot sauce and stand in a cold shower.

About 371,700 children were living in Russian state institutions in 2009, according to the Moscow-based organization Right of the Child. The Russian government is now seeking to boost domestic adoption to care for orphans or abandoned children as an alternative to foreign adoption.

Astakhov is seeking to strip a U.S. couple from Pennsylvania, the Cravers, of their parental rights after they were convicted of the involuntary manslaughter of their 7-year-old son adopted from Chelyabinsk.

He now wants to ensure the couple's adopted daughter, Dasha Skorobogatova and also from Russia, has no further contact with the couple, according to an official statement on the commissioner's web site.

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