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Another U.S. Child Abuse Case Surfaces

By Jennifer Rankin

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Matthew and Amy Sweeney, pictured, are in custody on suspicion of beating their 8-year-old adopted Russian son.

Investigators have opened an inquiry into the beating of a Tula-born child by his adoptive American parents, and the Foreign Ministry warned that the case could jeopardize an adoption agreement between the two countries.

A U.S. Navy officer and his wife from Bristow, Virginia, have been charged with child abuse after allegedly beating their 8-year-old son so badly that he ran away from home.

The Foreign Ministry said the beating of Daniil Krichun, adopted when he was a toddler, raised questions about the United States' readiness to enforce an adoption pact it signed with Russia in 2011.

The agreement must be signed by President Vladimir Putin before it comes into force.

"Long-term neglect by the American government agencies with regard to what was

happening to Daniil Krichun again raises questions about the readiness of the United States to fulfill to the fullest extent a bilateral agreement on co-operation in the field of international adoption," the Foreign Ministry said Thursday in a statement on its website.

"We insist that they bring order to this area," the statement continued. "On this will depend the conclusion of the procedure necessary for the agreement to enter into force and the possibility of our future cooperation in the field of adoption."

Separately, the Investigative Committee announced it was starting an investigation, and it voiced concerns about Russian-born children being subjected to violence and murder in American families.

"In each case, the Investigative Committee of Russia will conduct a thorough investigation, ascertaining all the circumstances of the crime in order to establish the identity of those guilty of committing a crime in relation to children," it said in a statement.

The case is the latest flare-up over foreign adoptions as Russia seeks to cut the number of foreigners who become parents of Russian children.

Adoptions between Russia and the U.S were all but frozen in 2010 after an American mother put her 7-year-old son back on a plane to Russia saying he was no longer wanted. The two countries signed an adoption agreement in 2011 introducing stricter checks on would-be parents, which the Federation Council voted to ratify earlier this month.

The accused in this case, Matthew Sweeney, 39, and his wife, Amy, were granted bail last week at a preliminary hearing.

Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov posted the police mug shots of the Virginia couple on Twitter, writing: "Yet more sadistic adoptive parents arrested in the United States. An 8-year-old adopted Russian boy ran away from these monsters."

"Every year, more than 28,000 adopted children suffer [at the hands of their] adopted parents in the USA," he added in a later tweet. A spokeswoman for Astakhov was not immediately available to elaborate on the statistic.

A spokeswoman at the U.S. Embassy said the Virginia authorities had been in touch with Russian officials, adding that the government was committed to ensuring reliable checks on prospective parents and excited about the introduction of the adoption agreement.

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