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U.S.-Russian Adoption Accord Enters Force

By The Moscow Times

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Russian children adopted by U.S. families will remain Russian citizens so that they can "return to the motherland in case of a conflict situation," the office of the children's ombudsman said Thursday as a new U.S.-Russian adoption accord came into effect.

"The U.S. is a lingering pain for us, as literally every day we receive more and more news about violations of the rights of adopted Russian children," Russia's children's ombudsman, Pavel Astakhov, said in the statement.

Upon entry into the United States, such adopted children will receive U.S. citizenship but remain Russian at least until the age of 18, according to the accord, which comes after lengthy negotiations and several near-failures in reaching a consensus, the statement said.

By establishing clear procedures for a child's safe return in case of a conflict, the agreement aims to prevent incidents such as that of Artyom Savelyev, whose adoptive mother returned

him alone by plane, the ombudsman said.

Americans who want to adopt Russian children will first have to undergo "social and psychological preparation" and present an official confirmation that they are "suitable," the statement said.

"Over the many years of our relations, more than 100,000 children have been taken from Russia. Many of them simply disappear from our sight," Astakhov said. "Not every adoption has a happy ending."

Nineteen adopted Russian children have been killed by the U.S. adoptive parents in the past decade, the statement said, adding that domestic adoption is on the rise.

"If all Russian children are taken up by Russian families, then the need for international adoption will fade," Astakhov said.

The U.S. Embassy said in a statement Thursday that the agreement "ensures that the adoption of children between Russia and the U.S. will successfully continue and the welfare of the adopted children will be more reliably protected."

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