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Tragic Orphan's Mother Seeks Custody of Brother

By The Moscow Times

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The biological mother of 3-year-old Max Alan Shatto, who died in Texas on Jan. 21 in the custody of his adoptive parents, has appealed to social services for help in restoring custody over Max's younger brother, who is still living in Texas.

Yulia Kuzmina appealed to social services in the Pskov region to help her gather the necessary documents to restore her parental rights over 2-year-old Kirill, or Kristopher Elvin Shatto, as he's now known in the U.S., Interfax reported Monday.

"She requested a list of the necessary documents in a written application," a spokeswoman for social services told Interfax, adding that Kuzmina would receive a response in writing.

Her request comes just as heated dialogue between Russian and U.S. officials over the Russian boy's death seems to be dying down.

The boy's death unleashed a frenzy of angry statements and accusations by Russian officials, with children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov initially saying the boy had been killed by his adoptive mother and demanding that the younger brother be returned to Russia.

U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul responded with a statement calling for an end to "sensational exploitations" of the tragedy and reassuring Russian officials that a thorough investigation into the boy's death was under way.

The boy's mother told investigators she found him unresponsive outside after leaving him to play with his brother.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has said it is "not necessary" to return Kirill, and that it's more likely he'd be placed into foster care or with other relatives than sent back to Russia.

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