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Adopted Russian Boy's Death in U.S. 'Accidental'

By The Moscow Times

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Max Shatto, the Russian toddler whose death sparked allegations of murder and calls for improved oversight of Russian children adopted by families, died of an accidental trauma, authorities in the U.S. state of Texas announced early Saturday morning.

"[The autopsy] returned a finding that the cause of death of this child was a laceration to the small bowel messentery artery due to blunt trauma in the abdomen. Based on all medical reasonable probability, the manner of death is accidental," the Ector County Sheriff's office said in an e-mailed statement.

Three pathologists at the Tarrent County Medical Examiner's Office and an outside medical examiner reviewed the findings and concurred that three-year-old Shatto's death was accidental.

Doctors concluded that reports of bruising to Shatto's body were "consistent with self injury" linked to a diagnosed behavioral disorder and that no medicines or other substances found in his body "could have contributed to this death."

An investigation into Shatto's death, which occurred in late January, is ongoing.

News of the incident provoked a furious reaction from senior officials when it appeared last month.

Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov initially accused Shatto's mother, Laura Shatto, of beating and murdering her son, and the Foreign Ministry released a statement blaming parental abuse for the death.

Several lawmakers, including Sergei Mironov, head of the A Just Russia party's State Duma faction, said Shatto's death proved that the government was right to ban U.S. adoptions as of Jan. 1.

Americans have adopted an estimated 60,000 Russians in the last two decades. At least 20, including Shatto, are known to have died.

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