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Ombudsman Alleges Another Case of Adoptee Abuse in Texas

By The Moscow Times

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Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said three Russian orphans adopted by an American couple in Silsbee, Texas, were systematically abused and beaten by their adoptive parents, in the latest allegation by Russian authorities of abuse of Russian children in the U.S.

The announcement comes on the heels of the death in January of 3-year-old Max Shatto, a Russian child adopted by a Texas couple last year, whose case has been touted by Russian officials as proof that a ban on U.S. adoptions of Russian children passed last year is justified. Texas authorities have said the death was accidental, but Russia has been skeptical of that judgment, demanding all the case materials for examination.

On Tuesday, Astakhov posted a statement saying there was an allegation made of abuse of three Russian children, Alexei, Anastasia, and Svetlana Klimov, who were adopted in 2003 from their birthplace in the Perm region by Texas residents Michael and Penny Deckert.

Astakhov said he learned about the case from the Russian Embassy in Washington, which received a letter dated March 8 from one of the adopted girls. According to Astakhov, the letter said the girl had been sexually abused by her American father.

Shari Pulliam, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, told RIA-Novosti that the girl and her sister have been in foster care since March 21 pending an inquiry opened by the local sheriff's department.

The adoptive mother denied the allegations in an interview with RIA-Novosti, saying the three children had been making false accusations for some time.

The girls' 17-year-old brother ran away in June, she added, and he is currently included in a national database for missing children.

Astakhov urged Texas authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of the girls' allegations and keep Russian officials informed of the results.

Russia's Investigative Committee has begun a pretrial inquiry to determine whether a criminal case should be opened, the committee said in a statement Tuesday.

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