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U.S. Judge Reduces Probation for Russian Spy's Son

By The Moscow Times

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PORTLAND, Oregon — A U.S. judge has reduced the probation period for a man who smuggled notes to Russian officials from his imprisoned father, a former CIA officer convicted of espionage.

Federal Judge Anna Brown noted the "exemplary performance" of Nathan Nicholson on Tuesday as she knocked a year off his five-year probation that will now end in December 2014.

Nicholson was sentenced to probation in 2010 for conspiring with his father, Harold "Jim" Nicholson, who had been sentenced to 24 years in prison for his 1997 espionage conviction.

The father was serving time at a medium-security federal prison in Sheridan, Oregon, when he began passing notes to the son to carry to Russian officials.

The younger Nicholson smuggled the notes out of the prison and carried them to Russian diplomatic stations in San Francisco; Mexico City; Lima, Peru; and Nicosia, Cyprus. He received $47,000 for his services as a courier.

Nathan Nicholson pleaded guilty to acting as an agent of a foreign government at his father's bidding.

Now 29, the son graduated last spring from Oregon State University in computer science and got a job creating websites.

He has agreed that profits from a possible movie about him would go to the U.S. government.

"Thanks to a huge amount of support through friends, family, and loved ones, I was able to become a working member of society once again," he told The Oregonian newspaper. "This is incredible news, and I am deeply humbled by it all."

His father was sentenced to an additional eight years after the incident and is currently in a federal prison in Colorado. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons lists his release date as June 27, 2024.

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