

Moscow Court Orders Arrest of Alleged Estonian Spy

September 07, 2014

The  Moscow Times

A Moscow court ordered the two-month detention of alleged Estonian spy Eston Kokhver on Saturday, following claims by Estonia's government that the defendant was abducted by unknown gunmen and forced across the border to Russia.

Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet has accused Russia of refusing to allow its consul to visit Kokhver in the detention center he is being held in, Interfax reported Sunday. Russia said the man was detained on its territory and is suspected of being a spy.

The incident came amid heightened tensions between the two countries. Only two days prior, U.S. President Barack Obama visited Estonia and assured the NATO member of protection from any Russian threat.

The Estonian Internal Security Service said the officer was investigating cross-border crime when he was abducted at gunpoint on Estonian territory near the Luhamaa border checkpoint.

The Russian Federal Security Service said the Estonian was detained in the Pskov region

of Russia — a claim that the Estonian security service denied.

He was carrying "a Taurus handgun with cartridges, 5,000 euros in cash, special equipment for concealed audio recording and materials that indicated an intelligence mission," the Russian Federal Security Service said in a statement.

Arnold Sinisalu, the director of Estonia's security service told the country's national broadcaster ERR that the officer was Eston Kokhver — a decorated police officer and an expert in the field of terrorism and extremist action prevention.

The Estonian Foreign Ministry said it summoned Russia's ambassador in connection with the incident, which it referred to as "disturbing." Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said Estonia expects "to receive all manner of cooperation necessary from Russia in solving this case and bringing the Estonian citizen back to Estonia."

According to the Russian law, Kokhver could face between 10 and 20 years in prison if found guilty of espionage against Russia.

(AP, MT)

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