

Former Soviet Officer Kept in Lithuanian Custody Over 1991 TV Tower Attack

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The Lithuanian capital's television tower.

A Vilnius court ruled Wednesday to prolong the arrest of a former Soviet tank officer who was detained in March on suspicion of being involved in the Soviet army's assault on the Lithuanian capital's television tower in 1991, Interfax reported.

Yury Mel, a Russian citizen who was arrested at Lithuania's border with the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, is to be kept in detention for another three months, the court ruled. Mel is one of the 79 Russian, Ukrainian and Belarussian nationals whom Lithuanian prosecutors are seeking over the deadly attack on the TV tower, according to Interfax.

In March, a Vilnius court ordered Mel to be kept in detention for two months pending an investigation into his suspected involvement in "committing crimes against humanity and war crimes," Reuters reported at the time.

Thirteen civilians were killed and some 1,000 injured when Soviet troops stormed the Vilnius television tower and the national broadcaster's building on Jan. 13, 1991. The attack followed

Lithuania's declaration of independence as the Soviet Union began to crumble.

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