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Russian State News Reporter Fired After Saying FSB Shut Yekaterinburg Museum

By Peter Spinella

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The FSB headquarters in Moscow.

A reporter for a state newspaper in Yekaterinburg was fired after writing that Russia's Federal Security Service closed down a major museum because of a photography exhibit co-organized by the U.S. Consulate, media reports said Tuesday.

The journalist, Yekaterina Kholkina, wrote in a brief article on Friday that the order came from the Moscow branch of the FSB, a successor agency of the Soviet KGB, according to a screenshot of the article posted on news site Ura.ru.

Kholkina confirmed to Ura.ru on Tuesday that she no longer works at the regional government-controlled newspaper, Oblastnaya Gazeta, but she declined to give a reason. "I don't work at OG anymore. Now I'm looking for a job. That's all I can tell you," she was quoted as saying.

One of the most popular museums in Russia's fourth-largest city, the Metenkov House Museum of Photography was scheduled on Friday to open an exhibition of 150 British and American photographs from World War II, in honor of the 70th anniversary of the war's end.

But a day before the exhibition's scheduled opening, the museum said it was completely closing for an unspecified period of time because of "technical reasons," according to a statement on its VKontakte social network page.

The original Oblastnaya Gazeta article is no longer accessible on its website. Just hours after the article was posted, the newspaper issued a statement that the information about the FSB order had come from an unidentified source and was unconfirmed. The regional branch of the FSB said it had nothing to do with the closure.

A day later the newspaper's culture editor, Yana Belotserkovskaya, wrote that the exhibition was designed to fit into a political narrative formulated by the West that they had won the war without help from the Soviet Union.

"The exhibition fits very well, simply wonderfully, into the idea that many Western and American news outlets today are trying to impose: that the war was won without us," Belotserkovskaya wrote.

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