Russian TV Channel Says Ukrainian Spies Tried to Recruit Technician

August 05, 2015

A screenshot from the website of Zvezda Channel

A Russian military-focused TV station said Wednesday that Ukrainian security service officers had tried to recruit one of their sound engineers while he was briefly detained in Ukraine.

Ukraine's security service, or SBU, threatened Anton Malyshev with violence until he signed a document agreeing to spy for them under the code name Onegin, according to the Zvezda television station, which is owned and run by the Russian Defense Ministry.

Malyshev and cameraman Andrei Sushenkov were held for three days by the SBU in June 2014 after being detained on suspicion of spying outside the eastern Ukrainian city of Slovyansk, news site Lenta.ru reported.

"On his return to Moscow the assistant operator [Malyshev] didn't start working for Kiev, but told Russian counter-intelligence officials about his recruitment," Zvezda said on its website.

Zvezda is due to run a program about the incident called "Onegin Will Not Call Back" on Aug.

9 in which Malyshev will describe his experiences.

The television channel said Malyshev and Sushenkov were handcuffed, blindfolded and thrown into a pit by Ukrainian security officers as well as being threatened with being tossed out of a flying helicopter.

Russian–backed rebels in eastern Ukraine have been battling troops loyal to Kiev for over a year in a conflict that the United Nations estimates has cost over 6,000 lives. Both sides have been accused of mistreating prisoners and criticized by international NGOs over arbitrary detentions of journalists.