

Russia Dismisses Western Criticism over Sentenced Estonian Policeman

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A still image from a video footage shows Estonian police officer Eston Kohver talking to a lawyer (R) from a defendants' cage during a court hearing in Pskov, Russia, June 2, 2015.

Russia on Thursday dismissed Western criticism over the sentencing of an Estonian police officer to 15 years in prison for espionage, a case that adds to tensions in Moscow's strained ties with the West.

A Russian court sentenced the Estonian police officer, Eston Kohver, on Wednesday, triggering an angry reaction from Tallinn and criticism from the European Union and the United States.

Russia arrested Kohver on espionage charges last September and says he was caught on Russian territory. Tallinn says he was taken at gunpoint at a border crossing and denounces his detention as illegal.

Brussels and Washington said Russia violated international law in handling the case

and expressed concern that his rights for proper defense were violated.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement the trial was in line with Russian and international laws and all Kohver's rights were safeguarded.

"We cannot fail to see the incoming bold statements as an attempt to explicitly politicize this criminal case, which gives no ground for doubts over its legality and validity of the ruling," the ministry said.

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