

Russian TV Crew Detained by Estonian Border Guards, Released After Questioning

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A view of Tallinn, Estonia.

Estonian border guards briefly detained and then annulled the visas of a Russian television crew from the state-run Rossia network, accusing the team of having misstated the purpose of their visit, news reports said.

The crew was detained and held for several hours of searches and questioning on Thursday, when returning to Russia following a reporting assignment in Estonia, according to Rossia television.

They were released and sent back home after having their visas annulled, barring them from future trips to the European Union, the report said.

Estonia's border guard service said the journalists had misstated the purpose of their visit when applying for visas, RIA Novosti reported.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the incident as “physical censorship,” Russia reported.

Relations between Moscow and the governments of Western-leaning countries among former Soviet republics have soured following Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine last year. Ukraine has denied entry to several journalists from Russia's state-run media, accusing them of serving as the Kremlin's propaganda tool.

Although a number of Russian television reports from Ukraine have been exposed as fake, Ukraine's denials of entry to Russian media journalists have been denounced by Human Rights Watch as “dangerous interference with press freedom.”

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