The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Infamous Russian Double Agent Dies in U.S. — Reports

July 07, 2016



A Russian double agent who fled to the United States has died, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday, citing unnamed sources.

Alexander Poteyev, a former colonel in Russia's Foreign Intelligence Services (SVR), handed state secrets to U.S. authorities before fleeing to the United States. He was subsequently sentenced in absentia to 25 years imprisonment for treason in 2011.

The SVR have so far refused to comment on the reports of the former colonel's death, the RBC newspaper reported. A unnamed source told Interfax that reports of Poteyev's death "could be disinformation so that the public will just forget about the traitor."

Information provided by Poteyev led to the exposure of a deep-cover Russian spy ring in the United States known as "the illegals." U.S. authorities arrested 10 people on June 27, 2010, on charges of "highly conspiratorial activity," with Russia's foreign ministry admitting that they were Russian citizens soon after.

The 10 spies were subsequently exchanged for 4 Russian citizens accused of spying for Western intelligence, and pardoned by then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Poteyev fled Moscow for the United States just days before the FBI arrested the spy ring.

His son and daughter had traveled to the country shortly before their father, Interfax reported.

The former head of Russia's Federal Intelligence Service (FSB), Nikolai Kovalyov, said that the damage Poteyev had done to Russia could not be downplayed.

"To betray people who had worked for so long, who had spent years creating a network: that requires some inhuman characteristics," said Kovalyov.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/07/07/infamous-russian-double-agent-dies-in-us-reports-a54484