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After Faking Own Assassination, Babchenko Lives Under Constant Guard

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Sergei Ogirenko / Reuters

The wife of Arkady Babchenko, a Russian journalist who faked his death in Kiev in May, says the couple and their daughter have been under round-the-clock surveillance after the incident, reportedly to prevent any attempts on his life.

Ukrainian officials in late May reported that Babchenko had been gunned down in his Kiev apartment. A day later, however, he appeared at a press conference alongside Ukrainian law enforcement, claiming his staged death had been an attempt to thwart a real murder plot.

In her first interview since the incident, Babchenko's wife Olga described how Arkady had come home one night and told her to open a bottle of champagne.

"In our 20 years together, that had never happened, so I understood something was up," she said in the interview published Friday by Newsru.co.il.

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“He explained that the SBU [Ukrainian Security Service] had come to his work and told him about a plot to attack him,” she said. “They showed him proof and Arkady, of course, believed them, because he didn’t have a reason not to believe the Ukrainian security services.”

The couple told their 11-year-old daughter Katya that her father was a “super agent who catches criminals and bandits.”

Olga also said the couple and their daughter now lived under constant surveillance and only communicated with others via video. “There are always armed people in our vicinity,” she said.

Babchenko has been widely criticized for the incident, with many accusing him of undermining the credibility of journalists.

“Some relatives were very offended,” Olga said in the interview. “Some said it was all theater and there was no plot.”

But, she added, “this is regular practice. Arkady wasn’t the first and won’t be the last [to stage his death.]”

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