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Briton Allowed to Stay in Russia After 2 Weeks in St. Petersburg Airport

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Roman Pimenov / Interpress / TASS

A Russian court has waived immigration rules for a Briton who spent two weeks inside a St. Petersburg airport with an expired residence permit.

Stephen John Beard, 64, has reportedly lived in Russia since 2010, where he married a native of Siberia's Irkutsk region and had a son. St. Petersburg's news outlets reported he put off renewing his residence permit when it expired along with his British passport in July 2018.

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For fear of getting a five-year entry ban after being kept from flying to London to reset his immigration status, Beard spent two weeks in St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport trying to avoid immigration authorities.

He “slept on semi-soft armchairs in the second-floor waiting room and learned to take light showers in the public restroom,” St. Petersburg’s Fontanka news website reported.

In an interview with the city’s 78.ru news website, Beard said he feared not being able to return to Russia to be with his 7-year-old son.

St. Petersburg’s Moscow District Court judge cited the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in ruling to let him stay with his family, the court system’s press service told Interfax.

Judge Yelena Sokolva said that deporting Beard “would have violated the rights and interests of not only the deportee, but also members of his family.”

In the end, he got away with a fine of 5,000 rubles ($76).

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