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Feline Felon's Escape Risks Unraveling Russian Drug-Smuggling Case

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A drug-smuggling case south of Moscow risks falling apart after the disappearance of the prosecution's key evidence: the cat that allegedly carried the drugs into a prison, the Kommersant business daily reported Wednesday.

Two suspects were detained last year after attempting to transport hashish and amphetamines into a Tula region prison inside a secret pocket in the cat's collar. One of the defendants' lawyers, Dmitry Sotnikov, told Kommersant that animal keepers responsible for holding the cat as evidence had misplaced it sometime last winter.

Related article: Police Intercept Cat Carrying Drugs into a Russian Prison

"We had permission to let the cat out of the cage because it was cold," a zookeeper recounted in a video Sotnikov shared on Facebook over the weekend. "But then strange dogs ran in, and [the cat] ran away."

Sotnikov visited the enclosure near Tula with plans to conduct an investigative experiment that he believes would disprove the prosecution's claim that the cat willingly wore the collar and zoomed in and out of the prison.

"Now it's impossible to verify the prosecution's arguments," he told Kommersant.

Sotnikov accused the prison authorities of "slandering" his client, Eduard Dolgintsev, and "protecting" what he calls a drug trafficking ring operating in the prison.

Lawyers interviewed by Kommersant said the court should dismiss the drug-possession case against Dolgintsev and punish those responsible for the cat's disappearance.

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