

Lithuania Pardons Russian Spies, Paving Way for 3-Way Swap

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Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda pardoned Russian nationals Nikolai Filipchenko and Sergei Moiseyenko amid reports of a spy swap with Moscow. **Wikicommons**

Lithuania's president has pardoned two Russian nationals in a move that could pave the way for a possible three-way spy exchange between Russia, Norway and Lithuania, its presidential office [said](#) Friday.

Last week, Lithuanian parliament amended legislation to allow President Gitanas Nausėda to pardon people convicted of a crime in Lithuania in exchange for Lithuanian citizens prosecuted abroad who "acted in the interests of Lithuania." Previous reports suggested that Moscow, Oslo and Vilnius were discussing exchanging two Russians jailed in Lithuania, two Lithuanians sentenced for spying in Russia, and a Norwegian, Frode Berg, convicted of spying in Russia.

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Nausėda pardoned Nikolai Filipchenko and Sergei Moiseyenko two days after Lithuania's pardon committee reviewed their applications, Lithuania's presidential office announced.

Filipchenko and Moiseyenko were both sentenced separately to 10 years in prison for trying to recruit Lithuanian officials. Two Lithuanian citizens convicted of spying in Russia in 2016, Yevgeny Mataitis and Aristidas Tamosaitis, could also be part of a swap, Lithuanian news agency BNS reported in October.

Sergei Naryshkin, who heads Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), said Russia would take reciprocal measures, without providing a timeline.

Russia's Foreign Ministry also said it would review in the near future a pardon request submitted by Berg.

Berg, a 63-year-old retired former guard on the Norwegian-Russian border, was detained in Moscow in December 2017 and [jailed](#) for 14 years after being convicted of gathering intelligence about nuclear submarines. He pleaded not guilty to charges of spying on behalf of Norway.

The Kremlin said last week that Berg had formally asked for a pardon, two weeks after a Russian state commission recommended him for one. On Oct. 24, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the Kremlin would decide "soon" on whether to pardon Berg.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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