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Russian YouTuber Arrested for Obtaining State Secrets

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Andrei Pyzh **Vkontakte**

A Russian YouTuber famous for exploring abandoned sites was arrested and charged with obtaining state secrets last week, authorities and activists said Wednesday.

Andrei Pyzh has uploaded hundreds of videos showing his visits to industrial sites and abandoned bunkers to his YouTube channel, which has about 800,000 subscribers.

He faces up to eight years in jail if found guilty of illegally obtaining and disseminating state secrets.

A Moscow court ruled Aug. 6 that Pyzh remain in pre-trial custody until October, Reuters cited the court as saying.

It is unclear if Pyzh denies the charges against him.

Pyzh's lawyer said his client's arrest was not linked to his blogs. However, news outlets pointed to anonymous comments on the vlogger's past Instagram posts promising "big

trouble" for gaining access to a functioning radar station that Russia uses for its nuclear strike early warning system.

Friends and family said they have lost contact with Pyzh since Aug. 5 and reports said his court-appointed lawyer did not inform them of his detention either.

"He was in total isolation without understanding or support," a member of Moscow's public monitoring commission told the Podyom Telegram channel.

Pyzh's friends said they tried to keep a lid on news of his detention and arrest coming to light in hopes of making it easier to secure his release through lack of publicity.

Russian authorities have accused or tried a wide range of people, including journalists and scientists, of disclosing state secrets or high treason in recent years. Critics have called the charges manifestations of the state's paranoia.

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