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Russian 'Illegals' Sleeper Agent Dies Aged 79

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Mikhail Valenkov. **svr.gov.ru**

Former Russian spy and sleeper agent Mikhail Vasenkov has died at the age of 79, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) announced Wednesday.

Vasenkov was one of 10 undercover agents arrested in the United States in 2010, after being accused of working for an underground network of spies dubbed the "illegals" — a story that became the basis for hit U.S. television series "The Americans."

Vasenkov and his fellow agents posed as ordinary Americans for more than a decade, building contacts with academics, industrialists and policymakers to gain intelligence.

The network, which included self-styled New York socialite Anna Chapman, was eventually broken up by U.S. law enforcement in 2010. All 10 agents were released less than a month later in a high-profile prisoner exchange between Washington and Moscow, believed to be the biggest spy swap since the end of the Cold War.

Vasenkov moved to Peru in 2013, where he lived with his wife of 39 years, Peruvian journalist Vicky Peláez.

“When performing tasks for the service, Vasenkov invariably demonstrated his inherent restraint, determination, and courage,” read the SVR’s obituary.

The SVR also praised Vasenkov’s work “creating and heading an illegal residency, which obtained valuable political information, which was highly appreciated.”

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