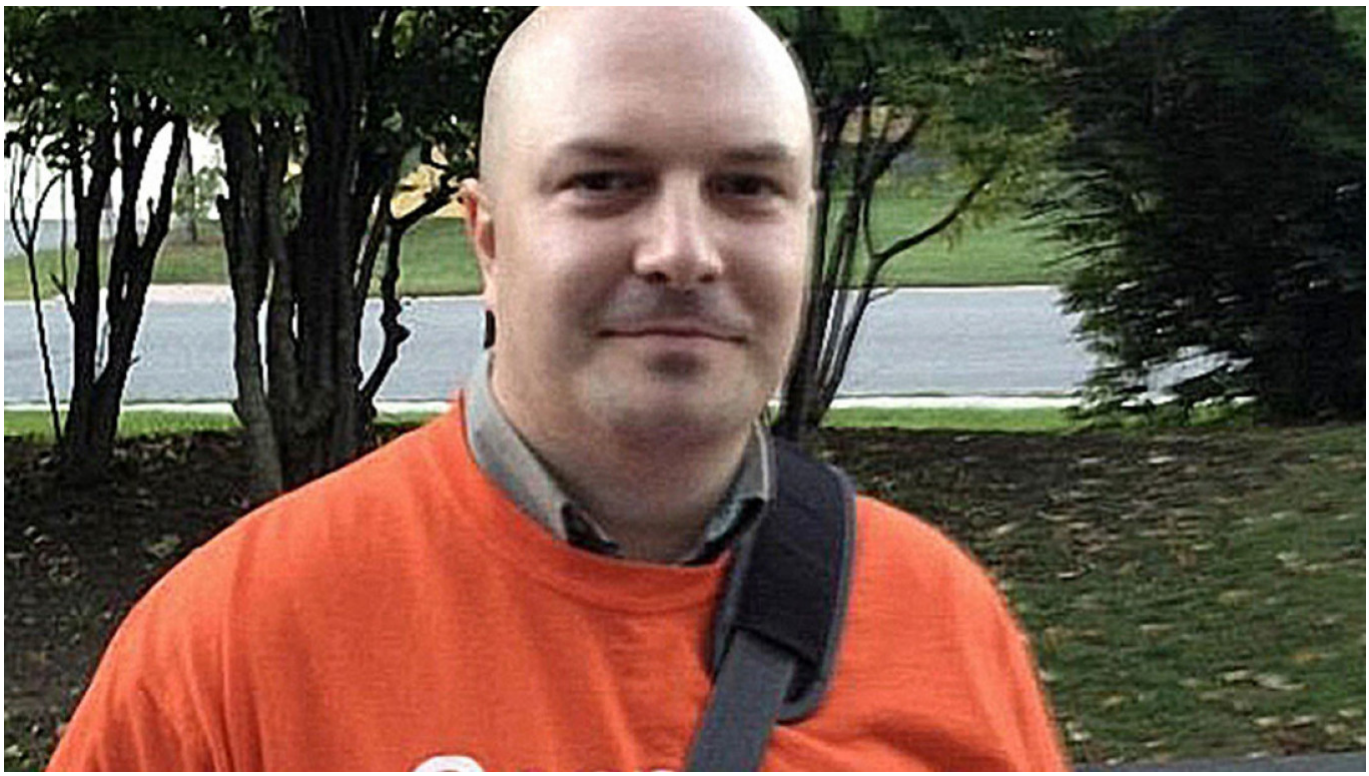
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Norway Arrests 'Academic' Accused of Spying for Russia

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José Assis Giammaria. **@Northern_Sentry / twitter**

Authorities in Norway have arrested a suspected Russian spy who claimed to be a Brazilian national, Norwegian television reported Tuesday.

The university researcher, who has not been officially named, is at least the 10th suspected Russian national detained in Norway this month, most of whom were arrested in the vicinity of key strategic objects.

The arrest is the first made by the Norwegian police security service (PST) of an alleged member of Russia's deep-cover network of spies and sleeper agents dubbed the "illegals," according to Norway's public broadcaster, NRK.

"We've asked that a Brazilian researcher at the University of Tromsø be expelled from Norway because we believe he represents a threat to fundamental national interests," Hedvig Moe, deputy PST chief, told NRK.

He expressed concerns that the suspect may have acquired information about Norway's policy in the Arctic before his detention in the far northern city of Tromsø on Monday.

"Even if this... is not a threat to the security of the kingdom, we're worried that it could be misused by Russia," NRK quoted Moe as saying.

The Guardian newspaper identified the suspect as José Assis Giammaria, citing two University of Tromsø staff members.

One of them said Giammaria had arrived at the university in December after contacting her with a request to conduct self-funded research on Arctic security and passing a standard background check.

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A second staff member described Giammaria as extremely protective of his privacy with a near-total absence on social media and a "funny" accent resembling Russian, according to The Guardian.

PST believes the suspect built up a false identity as an ordinary citizen while working undercover for foreign intelligence, according to NRK. It said South American countries are often the source of false identities because many of them lack central population registers.

Monday's arrest follows the arrest in the Netherlands in June of an individual the Dutch authorities believed to be a Russian spy posing as a Brazilian intern in an attempt to infiltrate the International Criminal Court.

In August, investigative reporters said they had unmasked an alleged Russian military intelligence officer posing as a Peruvian jewelry designer in Italy.

Russia's Embassy in Oslo has denounced the recent string of detentions in Norway as politically motivated. "In general, spy mania has been actively promoted in Norway of late," it told NRK, adding that the rapid turnover of cases was "without a doubt no accident."

A court has ordered the researcher's detention for up to four weeks while the case is being processed as an immigration matter, according to NRK.

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