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Evan Gershkovich's Interviewee Detained in Russia – Reports

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Yaroslav Shirshikov. **@urallive / twitter**

Russian law enforcement authorities have detained an activist and PR expert who was among people to be interviewed by U.S. journalist Evan Gershkovich before his arrest last month on disputed spying charges, the Kommersant newspaper reported Tuesday.

Footage that emerged on messaging app Telegram showed Russian security officers storming Yaroslav Shirshikov's apartment, arresting him and conducting a search.

Shirshikov faces charges of justifying terrorism over comments about the assassination of a prominent pro-war blogger this month, reported newspaper Kommersant, citing an unnamed law enforcement source.

While there is no official link between Shirshikov's detention and the espionage case against Wall Street Journal reporter Gershkovich, Shirshikov has said that he gave an interview to Gershkovich in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg and helped him with his reporting not long before his arrest.

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And Shirshikov was among those to publicly raise the alarm when Gershkovich disappeared in Yekaterinburg in late March. He said at the time that he had received a phone call from a Wall Street Journal employee looking for the reporter.

Gershkovich was the first Western journalist to be arrested on spying charges since the collapse of the Soviet Union and is currently being held in Moscow's Lefortovo prison.

A court in the Russian capital is due to consider an appeal against his arrest Tuesday.

According to Kommersant, Shirshikov's comments that led to the current terrorism charges were about Vladlen Tatarsky, a pro-war blogger who died in a bombing attack at a St. Petersburg cafe on April 2.

In the wake of Tatarsky's assassination earlier this month, Shirshikov wrote on Telegram that he felt "not a tinge of sadness" about the death of the "scumbag."

If convicted, Shirshikov faces up to seven years in prison.

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