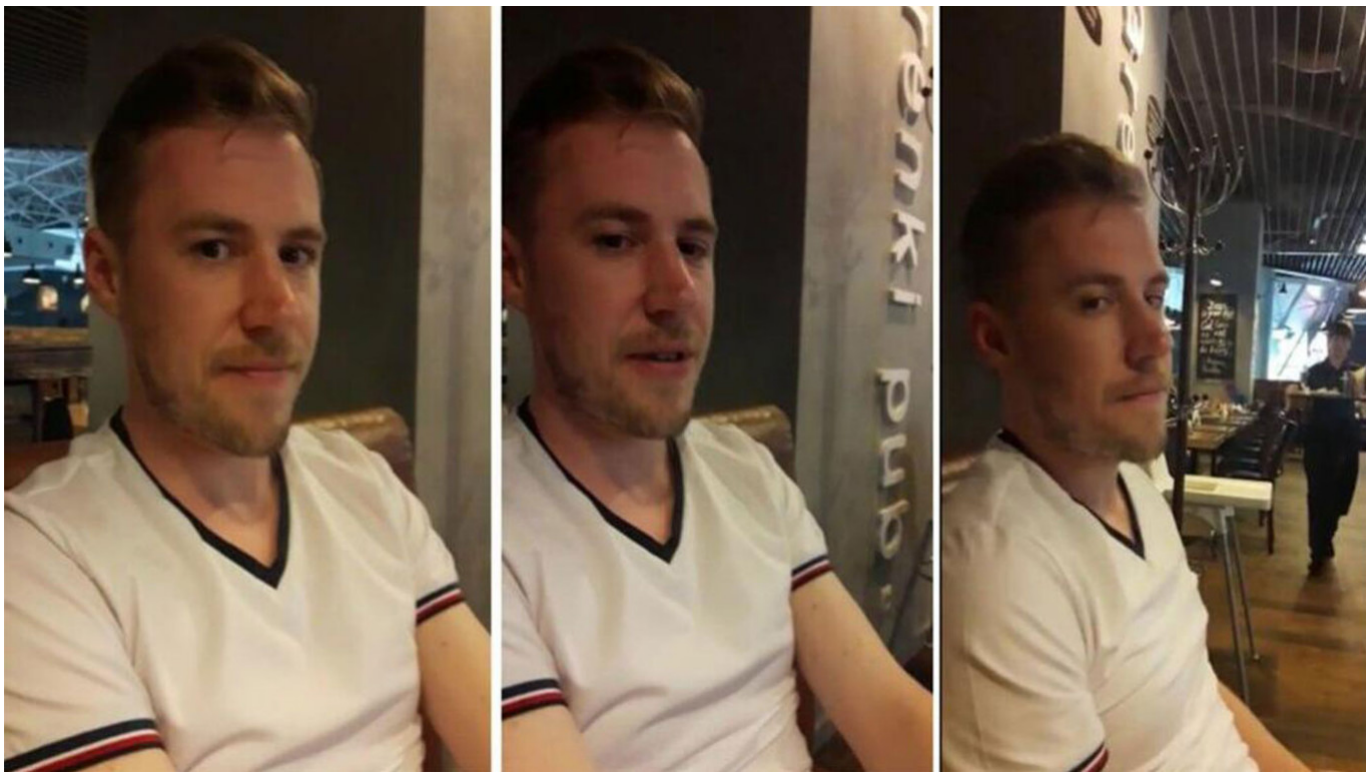
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Brazil Denies Extradition Requests From U.S., Moscow for Accused Russian Spy

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Sergei Cherkasov. **Video grab**

A court in Brazil has denied requests by the United States and Russia to extradite an accused Russian spy posing as a Brazilian citizen, the country's justice ministry said Thursday.

Sergei Cherkasov, 37, is in prison in the Brazilian capital of Brasilia for using false personal documents after being deported from the Netherlands. Cherkasov, who is accused of posing as a Brazilian student seeking an internship with the International Criminal Court in The Hague, is under investigation for espionage.

Russia requested Cherkasov's extradition last year on drug trafficking charges, while Washington is seeking his extradition on charges of acting as a foreign agent as well as visa, bank and wire fraud.

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Brazil's Supreme Court provisionally agreed in March to send Cherkasov to Russia after completing its own investigation into his espionage.

But on Thursday, Brazil's Ministry of Justice and Public Security said it had "suspended" Russia's request and called Washington's request "unfounded" because of the Brazilian Supreme Court's approval of Moscow's petition.

"At the moment, [Cherkasov] will remain imprisoned in Brazil," Brazil's Justice Minister Flávio Dino tweeted.

The denial is a "blow" to U.S. hopes of including Cherkasov in a potential prisoner exchange for Americans whom the Biden administration considers wrongfully detained in Russia, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday.

One of them is WSJ reporter Evan Gershkovich, who is has been in pre-trial detention in Moscow since late March on espionage charges that he and the newspaper deny.

WSJ cited an unidentified top Brazilian government official as saying that the preliminary decision on Cherkasov is subject to review by authorities.

A Brazilian court ruled Monday to reduce Cherkasov's prison sentence for document fraud from 15 years to five years, WSJ reported.

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