The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Charges Former U.S. Consulate Staffer With 'Collaboration'

August 28, 2023



Russian citizen Robert Shonov, a former employee of the US Consulate General in Vladivostok. **FSB of Russia**

Russia said it has arrested a former employee of a U.S. consulate on charges of collecting information about Moscow's war in Ukraine, Interfax reported Monday.

The U.S. State Department had in May denounced Robert Shonov's detention in the Far Eastern city of Vladivostok, saying he had been performing routine activities as a private contractor.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said it had charged Shonov with "confidential collaboration" with a foreign state, a crime punishable by three to eight years in prison.

He is accused of gathering information on Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine, its military draft and protest activities in the run-up to the 2024 Russian presidential elections.

Related article: U.S. Denounces Russian Arrest of Former Consulate Worker

The State Department said in May that Shonov was at the time of his arrest an employee of a private company contracted by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow that compiles press accounts from publicly accessible Russian media.

The FSB published a video of Shonov's arrest and testimony in which he named the U.S. Embassy employees Jeff Sillin and David Bernstein as persons who had sought his services in September 2022.

"I had to collect negative information, seek out discontent and reflect it in my reports," Shonov said.

Russia's FSB said it has sent requests to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to question Sillin and Bernstein.

Shonov had worked for the U.S. consulate in Vladivostok for more than 25 years until 2021, when Moscow imposed restrictions on local staff working for foreign missions.

Russian-U.S. relations have deteriorated since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Even before the war, the United States had suspended its two remaining consulates in Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg due to Russian-imposed staffing challenges.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/28/russia-charges-former-us-consulate-staffer-with-collaboration-a82262