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Soviet Dissident Skobov Detained for 'Justifying Terrorism' – Reports

April 03, 2024



Alexander Skobov. **RFE/RL**

Soviet dissident Alexander Skobov has been detained for "justifying terrorism" in social media posts about last month's deadly concert attack outside Moscow, the St. Petersburg-based news outlet Fontanka reported Wednesday.

Skobov, 66, was convicted twice starting in the late 1970s and subjected to punitive psychiatry for "anti-Soviet propaganda."

According to Fontanka, the dissident is accused of "speculating about who benefited" from the March 22 attack on Crocus City Hall on his Telegram channel, which has just over 1,000 subscribers. The Islamic State has said it was responsible for the massacre that claimed 144 lives and injured more than 500 people.

Russian law enforcement officials pressed charges against Skobov, who was at the home of human rights activist Yulyi Rybakov at the time of his detention on Tuesday night.

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Authorities seized Skobov’s phone and computer and prevented him from taking his diabetes medication with him, according to the Telegram news channel Rotonda.

He could face up to seven years in prison if found guilty of justifying terrorism.

Russia’s Justice Ministry labeled Skobov a “foreign agent” on March 22, the day of the Crocus City Hall attack.

He is among the few outspoken critics of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine to remain inside the country despite the risk of facing criminal punishment under wartime censorship laws.

An active member of the Lithuania-based liberal opposition platform Free Russia Forum, which the Russian authorities outlawed as “undesirable,” Skobov has publicly voiced support for paramilitary units made up of Russian nationals fighting on the side of the Ukrainian army.

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