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American in Russia Forcibly Sent to Psychiatric Hospital Ahead of Criminal Trial

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Joseph Tater. **@moscowcourts**

A U.S. man awaiting trial in Russia on charges of assaulting a police officer was forcibly sent to a psychiatric hospital, the state-run TASS news agency reported Sunday, citing court documents.

Joseph Tater, 46, was arrested in Moscow in August and charged with assaulting a police officer after allegedly harassing employees of the hotel where he was staying. If convicted, he faces up to five years in prison.

Moscow's Meshchansky District Court approved a request from doctors for Tater's involuntary hospitalization, citing signs of mental illness, TASS reported.

A medical commission from Moscow's Alexeyev Psychiatric Clinical Hospital found on March 15 that Tater exhibited "tension, impulsiveness [and] delusional ideas," including a sense of

persecution and "a lack of critical attitude toward his state," according to the report.

It was unclear when the court issued the order for hospitalization.

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As part of the investigation, Tater had earlier undergone psychiatric evaluation at Moscow's Serbsky State Scientific Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry — a facility infamous during the Soviet era for diagnosing political dissidents with mental illness.

Tater's trial is scheduled to begin on April 14. He was reportedly released from pre-trial detention on March 13.

His defense lawyer has appealed the hospitalization, accusing authorities of seeking to "isolate the defendant from society," TASS said.

Russia has arrested several U.S. citizens in recent years on charges ranging from espionage and discrediting the Russian army to petty theft and domestic disputes.

At a court hearing in September, Tater said he wished to renounce his U.S. citizenship and demanded that embassy officials leave. He also claimed the CIA had targeted him for years, according to Russian media.

Tater's lawyer told the judge that his client had traveled to Russia "to seek political asylum due to persecution by U.S. authorities."

Amid rising tensions with the West over the war in Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin has eased pathways for Western citizens to relocate to Russia on political grounds.

AFP contributed reporting.

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