

FSB Book Elicits a Vexing FSB Letter

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The  **Moscow Times**

The Federal Security Service has asked for information on the release of a book about the FSB, in what the book's author called an attempt to put pressure on independent publishers.

The book, titled "The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB," by journalists Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, was published in Russian in July.

The FSB contacted German Kravchenko, director of the Chekhov printing house, which printed the book, last Wednesday with a written request for "data on the people who ordered the book printed," according to a scanned copy of the letter that Soldatov shared with The Moscow Times.

He said the letter was provided by the book's publisher, Yelena Yevgrafova, director of Alpina Business Books. Alpina Business Books is part of Sanoma Independent Media, which publishes The Moscow Times.

A spokeswoman for Kravchenko said her boss refused to comment.

Reached by telephone, Yevgrafova declined to comment, saying she did not have enough information about the FSB inquiry.

The scanned copy of the letter contains the address of the FSB's branch for Moscow and the Moscow region. A spokesman for the branch declined to comment Wednesday. A faxed inquiry to the FSB's press office went unanswered.

"The New Nobility" was first published in the United States in English last September. But Soldatov said the FSB only started paying attention to it after it was published in Russian and "people started buying it up and actively discussing it." The book is listed as a bestseller by the Knizhnoye Obozreniye publishing house.

"If it were about the content, they would have started their actions [last September]," Soldatov, who analyzes the security services at the Agentura.ru think tank, said by telephone.

He called the FSB letter "an obvious attempt at pressure because they acted very pointedly" and called it odd because the FSB could easily find the requested information about the publisher on the Internet.

In addition, the FSB has confidential methods to find out personal information about people, he said.

Most of 5,000 copies of the Russian book have been sold out at Moscow bookstores and several major regional bookstore chains, and a second printing was planned, Soldatov said.

"Now the publisher will think twice," Soldatov said.

Speaking to Gazeta.ru, he also expressed concern that the FSB letter might "stop our investigative activities" because the FSB might organize "surveillance and wiretapping."

Many Russian publishers had refused to publish the book, Soldatov told The Moscow Times.

The 250-page book, based on 10 years of articles that Soldatov and Borogan have published in different outlets, including Agentura.ru and the opposition biweekly Novaya Gazeta, analyzes the work of the Federal Security Service and its predecessor, the KGB, over the last 20 years.

The book tells how the FSB plants moles in political opposition groups; how its officers "sell themselves" prestigious land plots on Rublyovskoye Shosse for peanuts; how the FSB fails to fight terrorism effectively; how its officers always continue working for the FSB, even when they have another official job; and how FSB officers have come to occupy key positions in the government and in business, the online magazine Shuum.ru reported Wednesday.

Part of the book is available for free in English on Google Books.

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