

U.S. Court Clears Parents in Adopted Boy's Death

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Texas court has decided not to press charges against the U.S. parents of Maxim Kuzmin, a 3-year-old who died about three months after being adopted from a Russian orphanage.

An Ector County District grand jury ruled Monday that there were no grounds for the prosecution of Allen and Laura Shatto, Kuzmin's adoptive parents, effectively closing a two-month investigation into the boy's death.

Medical experts earlier concluded that Kuzmin died in accidental circumstances while on a playground not far from the Shatto's home in the small town of Gardendale, Texas.

On Monday, local attorney Bobby Bland said at a news conference that Laura Shatto had left Kuzmin alone for no more than 10 minutes and that the boy was severely underweight at the time of his death.

"For him to suffer a fatal injury, a relatively light knock against any sort of object would have sufficed," Bland said.

He added that the jury was unanimous in its decision to clear the Shattos of responsibility.

Kuzmin's death exacerbated tensions between Russia and the United States after Pavel Astakhov, Russia's children rights ombudsman, claimed that the boy had died as a result of a "savage beating" by his adoptive mother and that he had regularly been given Risperdal, a powerful antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia.

Both allegations were denied by the U.S. side.

Responding to the Texas court ruling, Astakhov on Tuesday accused U.S. officials of refusing to conduct a thorough investigation into the circumstances of Kuzmin's death and described the court's position as "upsetting," in comments on Twitter.

Although the investigation into Kuzmin's death has been officially closed, Texas children's rights officials will conduct their own separate inquiry, Kommersant.ru reported. If their inquiry uncovers new evidence, the case could go back to court.

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