

Astakhov Rails Against U.S. for Removing Baby From Home

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A screen grab of Alex and Anna Nikolayev with their son, Sammy.

Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov has accused U.S. authorities of "severe neglect" for removing 5-month-old Sammy Nikolayev from his Russian parents and advised the parents to take action against them.

Alex and Anna Nikolayev, who live in Sacramento, California, took their baby son to the Sutter Memorial hospital with the flu two weeks ago, U.S. media reports said. But the child protective services took the boy after the parents left without receiving a proper discharge.

What exactly prompted the decision of the child protective services remains unclear. U.S. officials refused to comment, citing privacy issues.

Astakhov's office said the parents left because of concerns about the treatment of their son, who had been given regular check-ups since birth for a heart murmur.

"The actions of the medical staff raised questions from parents," it said in a statement carried by Interfax. "First, a nurse gave the child antibiotics, even though the doctor hadn't prescribed them. Doctors then said that the child needed a heart operation."

Sammy's parents had been given no reason to think that he was in imminent danger up to this point and left the hospital to get a second opinion from another cardiologist, the statement said.

Then on April 24, the police and child protective services arrived at their home and forcibly took the child into protective custody.

"This case, of course, has been taken under my control. A lot of information on this case is available, and is still being examined," Astakhov told RIA-Novosti. "We suggest that the parents make a complaint so that their child is returned. This process will not be quick, but I think we will succeed "

His office said that the boy's parents are dual citizens of Russia and the U.S. It was unclear whether the child has Russian citizenship.

Astakhov has become a fierce critic of the U.S. in recent months amid a dispute over the rights of Russian children in the U.S. He has defended a Russian ban on U.S. parents' adopting Russian children, which came into force Jan. 1 and is widely seen as the Kremlin's response to a U.S. blacklist of Russian officials implicated in human rights violations.

At one point, Astakhov flew to the U.S. state of Montana to demand that a ranch for troubled youth turn over its Russian-born wards to him. The owner of the ranch refused to allow Astakhov onto her property, and he left empty-handed.

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