

U.S. Returns Baby to Russian Parents

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A television screen grab of the Nikolayevs with their baby son, Sammy.

A California court has returned a baby boy who was seized by U.S. authorities from his Russian parents in a case that prompted loud denunciations from Moscow.

"After five hours of deliberation and analysis of factual information presented by both sides, the judge decided to dismiss all charges against the parents," said Igor Shaktarola, a diplomat from the Russian consulate in San Francisco, Interfax reported.

The Sacramento court on Monday also cautioned the parents to follow all future medical advice and not take 5-month-old Sammy from any hospital without proper discharge papers.

Sammy Nikolayev had been in protective custody since April 24 when police and child protective services removed him from his parents' apartment amid a dispute with the baby's doctors over his treatment.

After Sammy was treated for flu symptoms, doctors at the Sutter Memorial Hospital

in California decided that he needed an immediate heart surgery. The parents took the baby boy from the hospital for a second opinion without obtaining a proper discharge.

"We are aware Sammy's heart murmur and have consulted a cardiologist every two weeks," said the child's mother, Anna, Interfax reported. "No one ever gave any reason to think his health was in any imminent danger and there was a need for an emergency surgery."

The police and child protective services claimed "severe neglect" in their decision to take the baby. ☒

At the moment, the baby is hospitalized for further treatment, but child protective services have authorized the parents to be with him, children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said on [Twitter](#).

Astakhov also confirmed that the boy's parents are dual citizens of Russia and the U.S. He said the boy does not have Russian citizenship, a process that requires a special procedure and parental consent.

Sammy's case quickly gained widespread public attention and media coverage in both Russia and the U.S., with Astakhov lodging a fierce protest over what he described as U.S. interference into the rights of a Russian family.

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