

Estonia: 'Spy' in Russian Detention Was Lured Into FSB Trap

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The  **Moscow Times**

Estonia's Internal Security Service has said a man accused of espionage by Russia was the victim of a trap set by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB).

Estonia says that Eston Kokhver, who is currently in Russian custody, had gone to the Luhamaa border checkpoint to meet an informant as part of an ongoing corruption investigation last week when he was forcibly taken across the border by Russian agents. The FSB says he was detained on Russian territory in the Pskov region.

The informant was supposed to provide him with information on a suspected smuggling operation on the border in which FSB officers were involved, The Guardian reported Monday, citing unidentified Estonian security sources. Estonian authorities say the meeting was likely a set up in order to lure him close enough to seize him.

On Tuesday, a four-hour meeting between Russian and Estonian border guards to draft

a written statement on the incident ended in deadlock when the two sides could not agree on what had taken place, ERR News reported.

Kokhver had a back-up team for the operation, which involved Estonian police and border guards, but Russians seized the agent, preventing any rescue by deploying smoke bombs and a device to disrupt communications, Arnold Sinisalu, head of the Estonian Internal Security Service was cited as saying at a news conference Monday by the Estonian news website ERR News.

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said earlier that Russian officials had admitted in writing that Kokhver was taken on Estonian soil.

A statement released by the FSB said he was detained carrying "a Taurus handgun with cartridges, 5,000 euros in cash, special equipment for concealed audio recording and materials that indicated an intelligence mission."

The cash and recording device were meant for the informant he believed he was meeting, Estonian police chief Elmar Vaher said in comments to ERR News, adding that a surveillance camera at the scene of the incident was turned off for Kokhver's operation.

ERR News cited a retired Estonian general, Ants Laaneots, as saying the incident was a planned operation meant as retaliation for Estonia's closeness to NATO. The incident came just two days after U.S. President Barack Obama visited the country amid heightened tensions with Russia and reassured Estonian officials that NATO would protect the small Baltic nation from any Russian threat.

On Saturday, a Moscow court ordered that Kokhver be held in detention for two months while authorities investigate the matter.

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