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By Fred Weir

Russians warned if they go abroad, US might snatch them

US secret services are actively 'hunting' and jailing Russians in revenge for the annexation of Crimea – or so a warning by the Russian Foreign Ministry says.

Росіян попередили, якщо вони виїжджають за кордон, США можуть викрасти їх

Американські спецслужби активно 'полюють' і ув'язнюють росіян в помсту за приєднання Криму - так попереджає МЗС Росії.

Один з експертів бачить у цій заяві прагнення спорудити нову "залізну завісу", може, і не таку високу і міцну, як у минулому, але це є частиною пропагандистської кампанії, спрямованої на самоізоляцію.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2014/0411/Russians-warned-if-they-go-abroad-US-might-snatch-them>

Moscow

It's not your typical travel advisory.

Russia's Foreign Ministry is warning that Russians should refrain from traveling abroad because they could be entrapped by US secret services who are actively "hunting" for Russians to persecute in punishment for Moscow's recent annexation of Crimea, according to an official notice published on the Ministry's website.

The message seems directed at the approximately 15 million Russians, most of them middle-class, who leave the country each year for tourism.

It says the US, which "unreasonably" refuses to accept the reunification of Russia and Crimea, is seeking revenge by "trying to make a routine practice of 'hunting' for Russian citizens in third countries with the goal of extraditing them to the US, where they will be convicted [and jailed] on what are usually doubtful charges."

And it adds that "justice in America" is biased against Russians, who can be "kidnapped" and taken to the US without even notifying Russian consular officials about what is happening. The two cases cited as examples are old bones of contention between Russia and the US: those of convicted arms trader Viktor Bout and convicted cocaine smuggler Konstantin Yaroshenko, both of whom were arrested in third countries and extradited to the US for trial.

"I don't get this. The two people named in this statement are not typical Russians. Most who go abroad don't deal in arms or drugs, so what are they being warned about?"

says Nikolai Svanidze, a historian and TV talk show host in the vein of Charlie Rose or David Frost.

"What I see here is a wish to construct a new Iron Curtain, maybe not so high or strong as in the past, but part of a propaganda campaign aimed at self-isolation. No good will come of this," he says.

The warning is clearly aimed at all Russians who may contemplate foreign travel. "We strongly recommend Russian citizens refrain from traveling abroad, particularly to countries that have mutual extradition treaties [with the US]," the statement says. It then links to a US State Department list of about 110 countries that have such agreements, which is basically most of the outside world.

"This is a sure sign that there's a propaganda war going on, in which everything is now permissible," says Viktor Kremeniuk, deputy director of the official Institute of USA-Canada Studies in Moscow.

"It reminds me of Soviet times. This is not just anybody saying these things. It's an official organization, the Foreign Ministry, relaying this warning to Russians. That doesn't come from nowhere; it was obviously ordered from the top."