

Russia and Estonia in Dispute over Official.
September 6, 2014

TALLINN—The abduction of an employee of the Estonian Security Police near the Russian border was connected with a possible case of smuggling, according to the Estonian government. The official had been detained by Russian authorities on Estonian territory when he was near the border crossing at Luhamaa, Interior Minister Hanno Pevkur said on Saturday. This crossing of the border has been documented in official reports by Estonian and Russian border guards.

But Russia's intelligence agency FSB said that the official had been arrested on Russian territory in the course of a counter-intelligence operation. This claim was denied by Estonian security police. The main goal now, said Pevkur, was to get the official back home in Estonia safe and sound. Pevkur remains in close contact with the Interior Ministry in Moscow.

A court in Moscow formally approved the arrest of the man on Saturday. The suspect had a loaded handgun, about 5000 Euros, and "special equipment for making covert recordings," the Russian First Channel television station reported.

Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet has confirmed that the official is currently in Moscow. Estonia is in touch with the Russian Foreign Ministry but so far has not been able to talk with the man. Interior Minister Pevkur emphasized that the main goal is to get the official returned to Estonia safe and sound.

The incident has caused unrest in the other Baltic states. In Lithuania, Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius, after a meeting with Interior Minister Dailis Alfonsas Barakauskas, strengthened border controls. Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said the agency BNS, by an "arrogant provocation," has reminded the Baltic States that they have to remain vigilant.

The Latvian Foreign Ministry said that it was "deeply concerned." Interior Minister Rihards Kozlovskis offered Estonia his help in the investigation. Latvia and Lithuania also border Russia.