

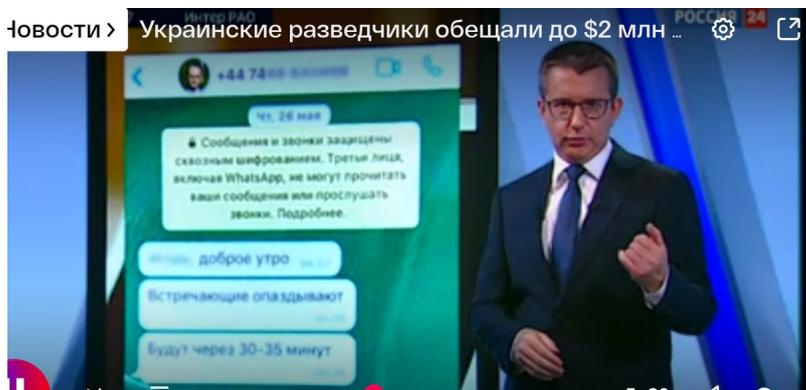


**Christo Grozev** @christogrozev Mon Jul 25 11:51:14 +0000 2022

Today FSB announced that they have “foiled a plot by Ukraine’s intelligence services” to lure Russian military pilots to surrender to Ukraine – with their planes – in return for millions of USD in payments (thread).

Using a traditional mix of forged "evidence" and loosely interpreted facts, the FSB also accused me personally of being involved in the plane-hijacking plot (on screen: totally forged message, I never had a UK number, obviously).

<https://t.co/NxtN66cALI>



What is true, however, is I was involved in this crazier-than-fiction story of triple-agents, fake passports and faux girlfriends - as a documentary film maker. Yes, we were chronicling one of the wackiest counter-counter-intel operations of all time. And the docu is still on.

While Russia is presenting today this as a coup for its counter intelligence, in fact the operation was a serious blunder for the FSB, disclosing unintentionally identities of dozens of counter intel officers, their methods of operation, and their undercover assets.

Remember the Wagner sting operation in Belarus? Well, as Russia invaded Ukraine, some of the Ukrainian operatives who engineered that sting decided to repeat it: this time by enticing RU military pilots to surrender. In April, Ukraine adopted an “weapons-surrender-incentive law” <https://t.co/A0Ej6ZcgoG>

Compensation will depend on the type of military equipment:

- Combat aircraft of fighter or attack aircraft - 1 million dollars;
- Combat helicopter - \$0.5 million;
- Multiple launch rocket system - 25 thousand dollars with a caliber up to 122 mm, 35 thousand dollars with a caliber from 122 mm;
- Tank, self-propelled ground artillery - 100 thousand dollars;
- Infantry fighting vehicle (landing), armored personnel carrier, armored reconnaissance and patrol vehicle - 50 thousand dollars;
- Military vehicle / tractor / engineering vehicle for reconnaissance, demining, barriers, laying tracks, etc. - 10 thousand dollars;
- Ship of the 1st or 2nd rank - \$1 million;
- Ship of 3rd or 4th rank - \$0.5 million;
- Military (auxiliary) support vessel - 200 thousand dollars;
- A small-sized combat (reconnaissance) vessel - \$50,000.

A team of Ukrainian operatives decided to approach Russian pilots with an offer based on this law. We found out about the initiative, and assured ourselves a front seat – to make a documentary about this brazen operation.

<https://t.co/hTQg8133LM>



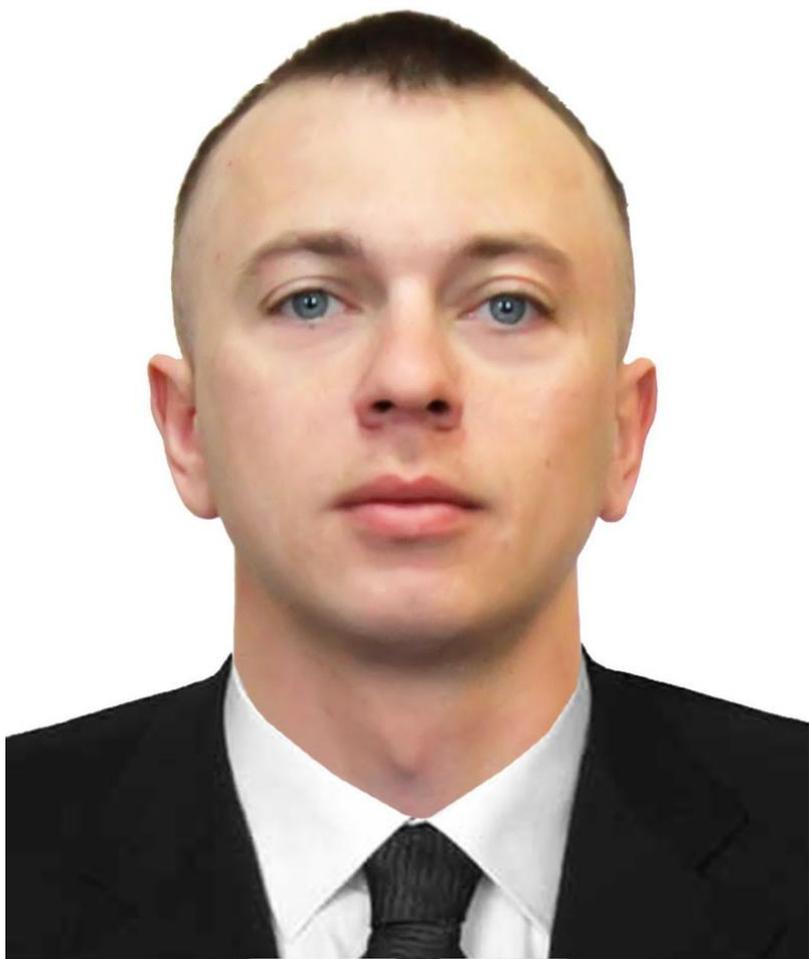
Several Russian military pilots were approached and even sent “proof-of-access” videos from inside their planes, in each case bearing a separate number hand-written on pieces of paper. Some of the footage from the inside of the planes was quite detailed and enlightening. <https://t.co/fxwOyZGtYv>



(Note that now FSB are presenting these videos as "controlled leaks" - while at the same time blurring the inside of the cockpit on TV). <https://t.co/4CRx87H6ul>



It took me about 5 minutes to discover that the pilot's "lover" (waaay too hot for him, FSB) was an FSB asset, working as a fitness trainer by day, but moonlighting as an FSB girlfriend-for-hire the rest of the time. (The Ukrainians figured that out too). <https://t.co/ozZLARIU6o>

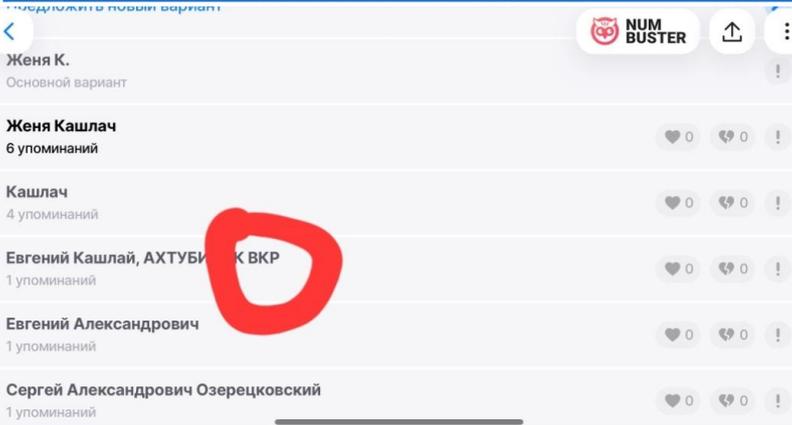




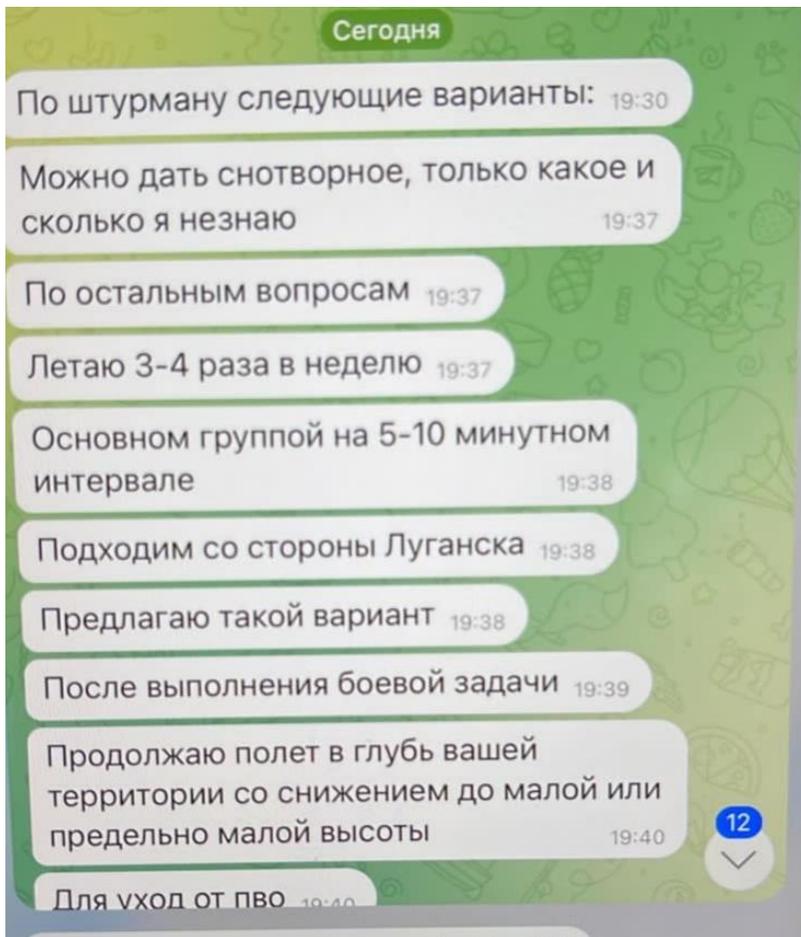
Nor did the pilot seem to know anything about his "girlfriend's" background (he was earnestly surprised she even had a travel passport, and that she had been in Istanbul a few months ago, and to Barcelona a year earlier).

...but I also found out throughout the process of her "boyfriend's negotiations with the Ukrainians, she she had been talking to an FSB military counter-intel officer. <https://t.co/hXgv4b1FHG>

Исходящий звонок	14.06.2022 11:22:28	79143942172	MTC (Амурская обл.)	00:00:31
Исходящий звонок	08.06.2022 10:01:23	79143942172	MTC (Амурская обл.)	00:01:05
Входящий звонок	08.06.2022 08:44:35	79143942172	MTC (Амурская обл.)	00:00:30
Входящий звонок	23.05.2022 09:29:28	79143942172	MTC (Амурская обл.)	00:00:07
Входящий звонок	23.05.2022 09:18:09	79143942172	MTC (Амурская обл.)	00:00:23



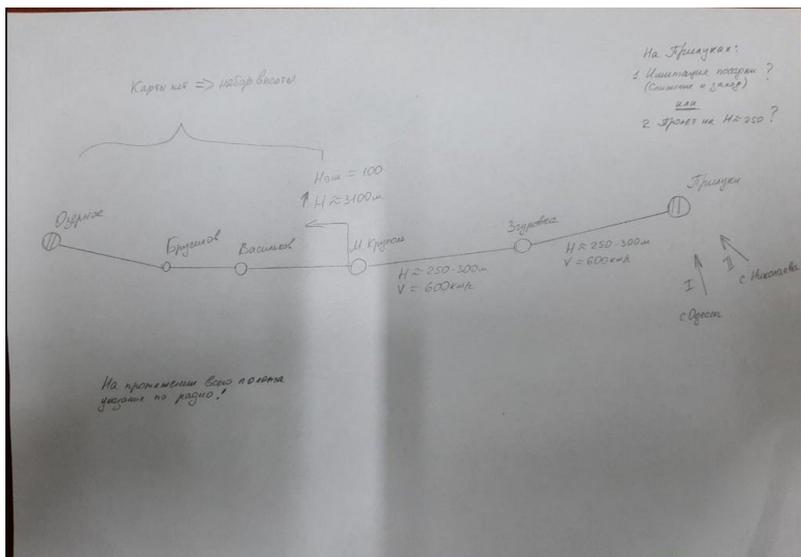
Another clue came when a different pilot suddenly asked his Ukrainian counterparts for advice in incapacitating his co-pilot with a sedative. <https://t.co/6hi0c4j17S>



At this point, it became clear to me that the original luring operation was over – and had turned into a double “operational game” in which both sides were trying to extract maximum information from the other, while feeding them maximum disinfo.

The Ukrainians started feeding the "pilots" - imem the FSB -fake maps of their anti-aircraft deployments, as well as disinfo on the operational airstrips.

At the same time, the pilots sent (probably equally fake) approach and descent maps of their own. We kept filming. <https://t.co/cKcKSkxclY>



(At one point, the Ukrainians even convinced the FSB to send the wife of one of the pilots - along with a whole FSB tailing team - to Minsk, waiting for a promised "meet up" with the Ukrainians handlers. The FSB waited in vain for 4 days)

This bizarre mutual-deceit game came to an end when the FSB realized no one will show up at any of the suggested meet-ups (FSB were keen to identify Ukrainian agents), realizing they've been burned. And the Ukrainians realized they're likely not getting a real pilot either.

Despite the unexpected ending (so far), we still plan to finish this crazy film.

An important P.S. based on questions from readers.

The Ukrainian operation was not a project of either SBU or GUR. (If it were, there'd be no way we would - or want to - get access to it). It was organized by maverick ex operatives whom we got to know in the Wagner investigation.

So all the Russian statements from today - claiming this was a "GUR" (Military Intel) operation "with support from NATO" - total, unadulterated bollocks. The whole of the FSB CI were fighting tooth and nail against a bunch of, essentially, volunteers.

And not for the first time.

Some more Moscow4 moments from this op: the fake girlfriend claimed she had no travel passport & needed help from the Ukrainians to get one (clearly FSB were trying to scout out Ukraine's network of support). However, she DID have a passport, so they told her to report it as lost <https://t.co/t8886wgrcX>

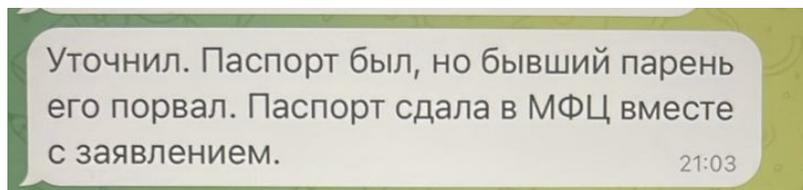
1.2.4 Загранпаспорт гражданина Российской Федерации

Серия 65 № 6827	31.07.2018 (срок действия)	—	Недействителен от 08.06.2022 (Утрачено)
Выдан:	31.07.2018, 480001 УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ПО ВОПРОСАМ МИГРАЦИИ УМВД РОССИИ ПО ЛИПЕЦКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ УМВД РОССИИ ПО ЛИПЕЦКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ (дата выдачи, подразделение)		

When the Ukrainians confronted the pilot with "hey man, your gf DID have a passport.. how come it was reported lost TODAY?.."after a long confused silence there came the cringiest of explanations:

"Her ex-boyfriend tore it up".

The FSB version of "the dog ate my homework" <https://t.co/gq18JuYbc1>



And probably the most meta moment of the whole thing.

Another pilot, writing under FSB dictation, said he wanted his family to have totally new IDs and leave no trace of leaving Russia, because: "I don't want the same thing to happen to us as with the Skripals". <https://t.co/LRDleUoguD>

запутали. Как я понимаю в документах, которые мы получим в Белоруссии въезд в нее не будет записан. Выходит, что нет разницы на какие ФИО они будут сделаны если они без отметок о въезде в Белоруссию? Так могут быть проблемы. Не знаю на сколько безопасен ваш метод. Поймите мои опасения. Если они будут выезжать из Белоруссии под своими документами, то об этом в РФ могут узнать, что они уехали за границу. Я не хочу, чтобы с нами случилось как со Скрипалями... Мне нужны документы на другую ФИО и с записями их въезда в РБ. Для меня этот вопрос принципиален. У вас должны быть возможности. Маршрут прорабатываю.

As I understand it, in the documents that we will receive in Belarus, the entry will not be recorded. It turns out that it makes no difference what name they will be made on, if they are not marked for entry into Belarus? So there could be problems. I do not know how safe your method is. Understand my concerns. If they leave Belarus with their documents, they may find out in RF that they went abroad. I don't want it to happen to us like with the Skripals... I need documents for another name and with a record of their entry into RB. This issue is a matter of principle to me. You must have the possibilities.

And one more "can't believe this s\*\*t is real" moment: this FSB military counter-intelligence guy in charge of supervising pilots, Maj. Nikita Bukhtatov, has an actual INSTAGRAM post with his own car next to a plane at a military airport.

<https://t.co/eo3Q2n34Xx>



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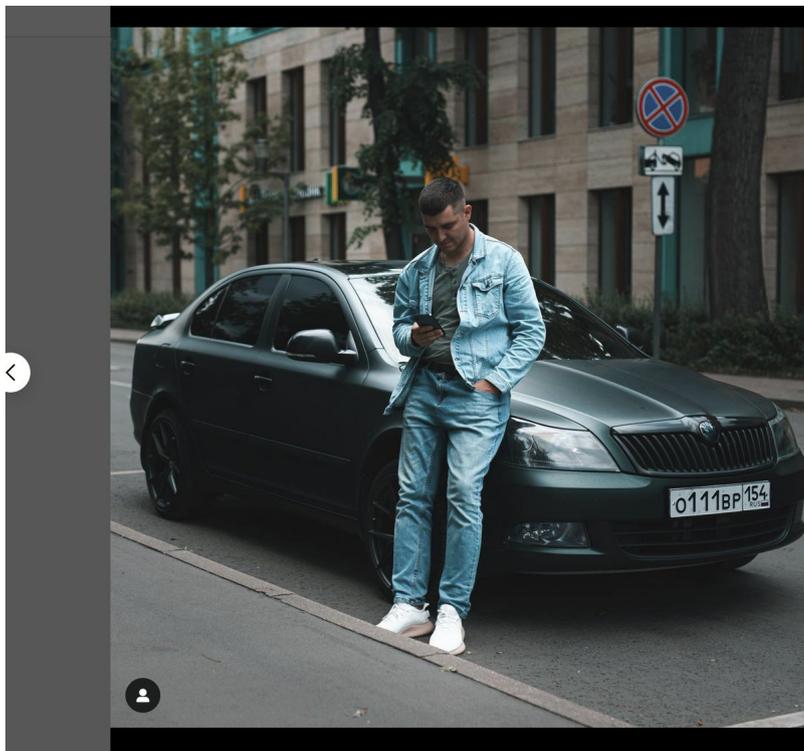


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231 likes  
MAY 11

...the FSB counter-intel guy loves his car....and instagram! Geolocation challenge. <https://t.co/T3AKIBIb3m>



"Look, ma, I work in counter-intelligence and will gram from every assignment so you know I'm okay"  
<https://t.co/YZfuNZWBr3>

