

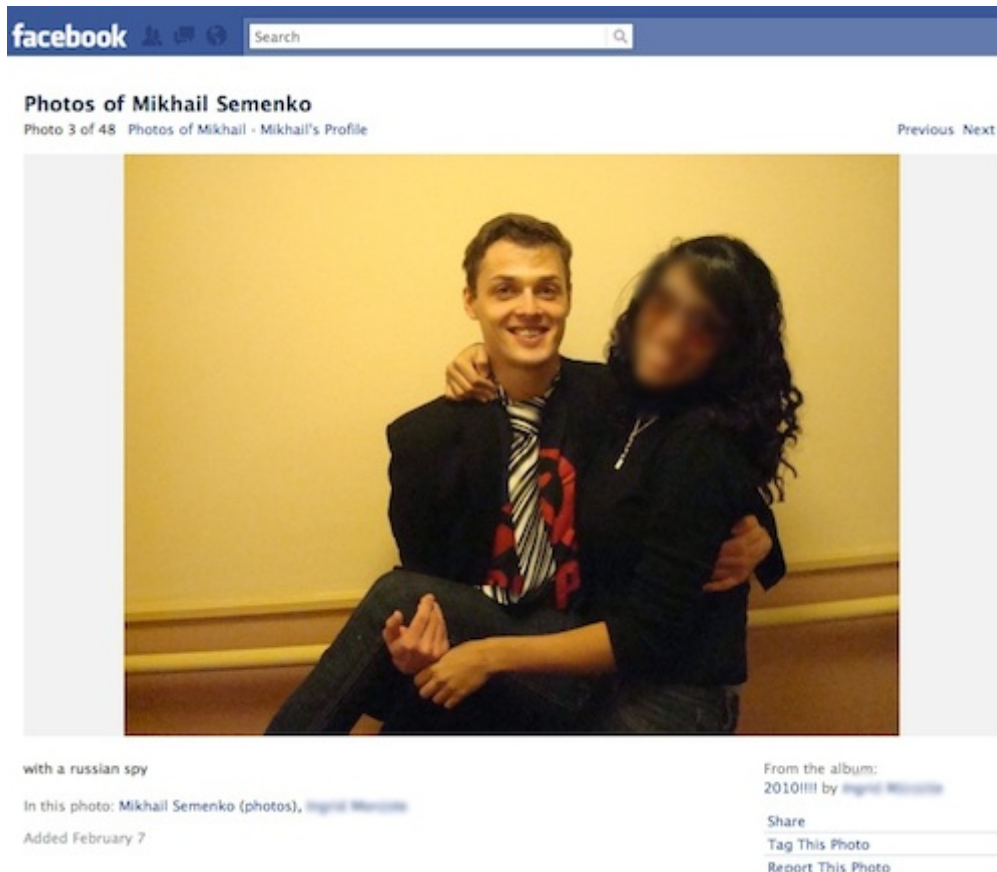


Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on July 1, 2010

Girlfriend of Accused: “With a Russian Spy”

As photos and information from accused Russian spy Anna Chapman’s social networking connections continue to circulate around the Internet, information of the other accused Russian agents, such as Mikhail Semenko, has remained a mystery — that is, until now.

A shocking item that will be sure to fuel the speculations of espionage is in what appears to be an innocent Facebook photo of Semenko and his girlfriend. The photo itself is not what is shocking but rather the caption which reads right under it: “with a russian spy.” According to the Facebook webpage, where the photo appears, it was uploaded on February 7, 2010, by his girlfriend. The caption was most likely written on that same day, months prior to the FBI bust on June 27, 2010.



Whether or not his girlfriend wrote the caption in jest or seriousness is uncertain, but this also begs the question of whether or not Semenko told her anything. He may have slipped out the remark as a joke,



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or he may have told her more than he should have.

Aside from this one red flag, nothing else appears to suggest he is anything more than just your average recent college grad student. Semenko enjoys playing his guitar and spending time with his girlfriend; he is a fan of Ilya Kovalchuk, former NHL player for the New Jersey Devils and Atlanta Thrashers, and is a fan of a few Russian and Chinese musicians; he has an interest in Chinese economics.

Like Anna Chapman, Semenko is also an active user of social networking sites such as Facebook.com and LinkedIn.com, and he runs his own online blog about Chinese economic issues.

Semenko was born on December 17, 1982 and raised in the city of Blagoveschensk, located in the far-eastern frontier of the then-Soviet Union near the Russo-Chinese border.

Upon graduating high school in the year 2000, he enrolled in Amurskij Gosudarstvennyj Universitet (Amur State University), which is also located in Blagoveschensk, earning a bachelors degree in International Relations as well as becoming proficient in Mandarin Chinese, in 2005.

Pursuing a master's degree in the same field, Semenko enrolled at the John C. Whitehead School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Seton Hall University, located in South Orange, New Jersey.

In 2007, while being a student at Seton Hall, he interned for the World Affairs Council in New York City.

After graduating in 2008 with an MA in both Diplomacy and Asian Studies, Semenko became employed by the non-profit Conference Board organization until he was terminated from his position in January 2009.

Two months later his proficiency in Russian, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish, and intermediate knowledge in German and Portuguese, helped him get a job with Travel All Russia travel agency, in Washington D.C.

[According to the Huffington Post](#), his employer described him as both awkward and smart and made notice that he enjoyed "frequent embassy functions." The employer, however, was shocked to find out that Semenko was one of the 10 detained suspects accused for espionage on behalf of the Russian government and SVR, a Russian intelligence agency that replaced the Soviet Union's KGB.

Semenko was arrested on Sunday, June 27, along with nine other suspects, after an undercover FBI agent posing as a Russian government official apparently "caught him in the act."

According to the documented FBI charges, available at the Department of Justice website for download ([pdf](#)), Semenko was under the surveillance of law-enforcement agents on June 5, 2010. At approximately 11:00 p.m. that day, Semenko went into a restaurant carrying a bag. Ten minutes later, the surveillance officials spotted a car with a Russian diplomatic license plate. The driver of the vehicle was identified as an official from the Russian government. The Russian government official remained in his parked car, which was within close proximity to the same restaurant as Semenko, for only a few minutes before driving off.

During the span of that time the law-enforcement agents, "pursuant of judicial order, utilized the same commercially available tool that can detect the presence of wireless networks ... that was used during the surveillance operations on ANNA CHAPMAN," according to the charges.

"The device," reportedly, "was able to detect the presence of two MAC addresses on an ad hoc network during the time that SEMENKO and [the] Russian Government Official ... were in the vicinity of each



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other inside the Restaurant and its parking lot, respectively.”

Counterintelligence FBI special agent Amit Kachhia-Patel, who filled the charges, stated, “I believe that SEMENKO was trying to utilize the private wireless network system to communicate with [the] Russian Government Official.”

The charges continue to state that not too long after, on June 26, an undercover FBI agent, “who was posing as an agent of the Russian Government,” called Mikhail Semenko’s cell phone. During the conversation, which was pursuant to judicial authorization, the undercover agent asked Semenko, “could we have met in Beijing in 2004?” In accordance with standard Russian espionage procedure, Semenko is reported to have replied: “Yes, we might have but I believe it was in Harbin.”

Both the FBI undercover agent and Semenko went on to meet each other near the intersection of 10th Street N.W. and H Street N.W. in Washington, D.C. at approximately 7:28 p.m. The meeting between the two was recorded by an audio device worn by the FBI agent. Again, the undercover FBI agent asked the question if they had met in Beijing during 2004 and again Semenko replied, “Yes, we might have but I believe it was in Harbin.”

The two discussed the alleged wireless transmission between the Russian government agent and Semenko that took place on June 5. Semenko’s reply was “I got mine” and that he “saw the stuff [he] received.” Semenko further explained that his equipment, during the June 5 wireless communication, was “open” and facing “the right direction.” He went on to reveal “I just create the file, Zip it,” and he also acknowledge that he knew that the equipment was “sensitive.”

Semenko also kept referring to “the Center guys, the Center guys,” perhaps a reference to Moscow Center, where the Russian government and SVR oversaw and directed the entire espionage network in the United States.

The charges also claim that when the undercover FBI agent asked him as to “what he would do with his communications equipment if ‘something goes down,’” Semenko “responded that he would erase the hard drive of the communications equipment.”

Semenko informed the agent that he had met with another Russian government individual in New York City before, and that the street corner in Washington D.C. had not yet been approved, although the site had been proposed as a contact location.

Before leaving, Semenko was assigned with a “mission” to drop off \$5,000 in cash, which was folded in a newspaper, at a specific location at Arlington Park by the next day. Semenko took the folded newspaper, which was then uncovered by the FBI at the specific site the next day just as Semenko said he would place it.

These charges against Semenko are yet to be proven true, but the Facebook photo caption certainly does not conflict with the accusations of his espionage.

Thumbnail photo: Mikhail Semenko; Facebook screengrab: Semenko with his girlfriend



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