

Soviets call Willson a peace hero, accuse the U.S. of rights violation

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S. Brian Willson, who was maimed in Concord when he was struck by a train during a demonstration against American support for the Nicaraguan rebels, has been embraced by the Soviet Union as the newest in a line of American dissidents.

Willson, who was hit by a munitions train leaving the Concord Naval Weapons Station, has been hailed in the official Soviet press as a hero of peace, offered free medical care in the Soviet Union, and held up as evidence that the United States violates human rights.

"The bright name of Brian Willson was put down in the chronicle of human nobility and courage," Genrikh Borovik, the head of the officially sanctioned Soviet Peace Committee told television viewers

Wednesday night. "His selfless deed is regarded everywhere in the world as a heroic feat in the name of peace."

Willson joins a pantheon of Americans lionized in the Soviet Union, in what Western diplomats view as a notable shift in the Soviet-American debate over human rights.

Where Moscow officials once brushed off Western complaints of rights violations in their country, they now discuss the problem more openly, while hammering at what they present as mirror-image abuses in the United States.

Willson, a 46-year-old Vietnam veteran, had his right leg severed below the knee and his left leg irreparably mangled Sept. 1, when he was run over by the train as he sat on the tracks outside the weap-

ons station. He and others were protesting what they say are U.S. weapons shipments to Central America from Concord.

Soviet coverage of the event has risen steadily, and has included interviews with lawyers who denounced the failure of the authorities to stop the train, commentaries saying the incident was deliberately arranged by the U.S. military.

Tass, citing the American Communist Party newspaper Peoples Daily World, reported that public protests had "swept" the United States "from western to eastern seaboard." On Wednesday night, Soviet television broadcast a telephone conversation between Willson's wife, Holly Rauhen, and Genrikh Borovik, chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee.