



Convicted Arms Dealer Viktor Bout Headed Back to Russia?

Earlier this year, in April, Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout was sentenced to 25 years in prison and Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Despite his being initially sent to the super-max security prison in Florence, Colorado, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons has announced that it would transfer Bout to a medium-security prison in Marion, Illinois.

Yaroshenko is currently serving his prison sentence at the low security Federal Correctional Institution in Fort Dix, New Jersey. According to the BOP, Bout is set to be released on December 15, 2029 and Yaroshenko on October 30, 2027, but they may both be released much sooner if Russia has its way.



According to RT (Russia Today), Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov revealed, "We are exploring various options for resolving the problem of returning both Bout and Yaroshenko to their homeland." Ryabkov further elaborated, "There are various legal procedures, but no matter what these procedures are — be it the 1983 Council of Europe Convention or some other format — it is important that there should be political will."

Bout was originally expected to be handed a life sentence after a New York judge in the Federal District Court in lower Manhattan found him guilty on all four counts:

Count one: conspiracy to kill U.S. nationals;

Count two: conspiracy to kill U.S. officers or employees;

Count three: conspiracy to acquire and use an anti-aircraft missile; and

Count four: conspiracy to provide material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Bout was apprehended in March 2008 in Thailand during an undercover operation in which agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) posed as Colombian Marxist FARC rebels.

In an interview on CBS's *60 Minutes*, Louis Milione, the top DEA agent credited with the capture of Bout, recalled the meeting in which he and another undercover DEA agent passing as Colombian FARC (revolutionary armed forces) members signed a deal with Bout for weapons to "fight against the Colombian Army and the American pilots that protected them."

Milione recalled how Bout said he would be able to supply "Anti-personnel mines. Fragmentation grenades. Armor-piercing rockets. Money laundering services. And all within the context of speaking



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on June 26, 2012

about a *shared ideology of communism* and fighting against the Americans.” [Emphasis added.]

Bout is also suspected of playing a key role in the clandestine deliveries of Russian arms to Syria and Iran by way of Belarus, which Ivan Safronov, a Russian journalist and military correspondent for the newspaper *Kommersant*, was investigating before he was mysteriously killed in 2007, when he apparently fell three stories from the window of his apartment building.

Although considered a businessman by his family and supporters in the Russian government and RT television channel, Bout’s business transactions included trafficking arms to Afghanistan, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Liberia, Libya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

The arms, according to prosecuting Assistant Attorney Brendan McGuire, were “one hundred surface to air missiles, 20,000 machine guns, 20,000 grenades, 740 mortars, 350 sniper rifles, 10 million rounds of ammunition and five tons of C-4 explosives.”

These arms were trafficked by way of Bout’s “shipping business,” comprised of a vast fleet of Ilyushin Il-76 cargo planes that he acquired shortly after the alleged collapse of the Soviet Union. Bout was able to obtain the aircrafts through his connections as a former officer in the GRU (*Glavnoye Razvedyvatel’noye Upravleniye*), the foreign military intelligence directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army.

Bout’s clients included many Marxist and Muslim surrogate actors of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which Bout kept fighting through his support of anti-American communist terror groups. Russia’s determination to repatriate Bout and one of his pilots further illustrates Russia’s continued Cold War posture.

If Bout and Yaroshenko are repatriated to Russia they would be the highest profile criminals sent to Moscow since the 12 arrested Russian spies, including Anna Chapman, were sent back to a hero’s welcome.

Photo: Viktor Bout in the custody of DEA agents on November 16, 2010 after being extradited to the United States.



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