



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on October 13, 2008

“Merchant of Death” Viktor Bout Fights Extradition

A U.S. indictment announced in May charged Bout with four terrorism offenses, including conspiring to kill Americans, conspiring to kill U.S. officers or employees, conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, and conspiring to acquire and use an anti-aircraft missile. Federal prosecutors accuse him of offering a deadly arsenal of weaponry to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the communist narco-terrorists who control much of Colombia. The proposed arms sale was to have included hundreds of surface-to-air missiles, thousands of guns, high-tech helicopters, and airplanes armed with grenade launchers and missiles.



The elusive Russian, who had been lured to Thailand to consummate the deal, learned after his arrest that the "FARC terrorists" he was dealing with were actually DEA agents. Viktor Bout, who was the alleged inspiration for the amoral, death-dealing arms merchant in the 2005 movie, *Lord of War*, starring Nicholas Cage, has fueled the killing fields of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Uganda, and Sudan, and run arms to the Philippines, Libya, Afghanistan, Zaire, Kenya, Lebanon, and Iraq.

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Most news reports on "Viktor B," as he is known in arms-trafficking and intelligence circles, describe Bout as a "former KGB agent" who is now a freelance businessman. However, he is one of the old Soviet hands who have enabled the "new" Russia of Putin & Company to carry on the old Kremlin program of spreading global revolution, terror, and chaos under a shallow veneer of deniability. But his cover is so thin that only the completely naïve or willfully blind could believe his "I'm just a capitalist doing business" line. Bout, who has been on "wanted" lists worldwide for years, runs his many front companies and global air transport operations out of Moscow and uses multiple Russian passports under a variety of aliases. This protective sanctuary under the aegis of Putin's KGB-FSB regime, together with Bout's apparent ties to Russia's military intelligence (the old Soviet GRU), through which he obtains the arms for his customers, provides a few "clues" to the sensible that "Viktor B" is still an intelligence operative working for his old Kremlin masters.

There are many more clues to support this thesis of Bout as a continuing KGB-FSB-GRU agent. Such as his close ties to Major General Vladimir Marchenko, the KGB-FSB operative who headed Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs from 1998 to 2002. Or his business associates, such as Andres Smulyan and Ernst Werner Glatt, who also have curious ties to the KGB-FSB and other former Eastern Bloc intelligence services. Then there is the extraordinary effort on the part of the Putin regime to free Bout, as if he might hold secrets that the Russian government does not want revealed.

Even more interesting (and especially relevant) in light of America's continuing so-called "war on terror" is the apparent conflict within the U.S. government over whether or not to press for Bout's



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extradition. Certain forces within the DEA and Justice Department appear to be gung-ho to prosecute him, but other high-level forces in the State, Defense, and Homeland Security Departments seem to be more amenable to allowing him to slip off the hook again. Will the Justice Department/DEA gung-ho team get the telephone call ordering them to drop the case and let Bout walk, as actor Ethan Hawk's character did in *Lord of War*, allowing the Nicholas Cage character to carry on his murderous business? Very possibly. There certainly are many government officials who don't want to have to explain why they hired Bout's companies for millions of dollars to make hundreds of flights into Iraq and other hot spots, while at the same time denouncing him and tasking other agencies to search the globe for him as a fugitive criminal.

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