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IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
TUESDAY,
MAY 6, 2008
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**NSD
(202) 514-2007
TDD (202) 514-1888**

U.S. Announces Indictment Of International Arms Dealer for Conspiracy to Kill Americans and Related Terrorism Charges

NEW YORK—Michael J. Garcia, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michele M. Leonhart, the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), announced today the unsealing of an indictment against international arms dealer Viktor Bout, a/k/a Boris, a/k/a Victor Anatoliyevich Bout, a/k/a Victor But, a/k/a Viktor Budd, a/k/a Viktor Butt, a/k/a Viktor Bulakin, a/k/a Vadim Markovich Aminov, for, among other things, conspiring to sell millions of dollars worth of weapons to the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the FARC) -- a designated foreign terrorist organization based in Colombia -- to be used to kill Americans in Colombia.

Bout was arrested by Thai authorities on a provisional arrest warrant on April 9, 2008, based on a complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, charging conspiracy to provide material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization. Bout has been in custody in Thailand since March 6, 2008. According to the indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

Bout, an international weapons trafficker since the 1990s, has carried out his weapons-trafficking business by assembling a fleet of cargo airplanes capable of transporting weapons and military equipment to various parts of the world, including Africa, South America and the Middle East. In 2004, as a result of his weapons trafficking activities in Liberia, the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control within the Department of Treasury placed Bout on the Specially Designated Nationals list, which prohibits any transactions between Bout and any U.S. nationals, and freezes any of Bout's assets that are within the jurisdiction of the United States.



Between November 2007 and March 2008, Bout agreed to sell to the FARC millions of dollars' worth of weapons -- including surface-to-air missile systems (SAMs), armor piercing rocket launchers, AK-47 firearms, millions of rounds of ammunition, Russian spare parts for rifles, anti-personnel land mines, C-4 plastic explosives, night-vision equipment, "ultralight" airplanes that could be outfitted with grenade launchers and missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Bout agreed to sell the weapons to two confidential sources working with the DEA (the CSs), who represented that they were acquiring these weapons for the FARC, with the specific understanding that the weapons were to be used to attack United States helicopters in Colombia.

As described in the Indictment, during a covertly recorded meeting in Thailand on March 6, 2008, Bout stated to the CSs that he could arrange to airdrop the arms to the FARC in Colombia, and offered to sell two cargo planes to the FARC that could be used for arms deliveries. Bout also provided a map of South America, and asked the CSs to show him American radar locations in Colombia. Bout said that he understood that the CSs wanted the arms for use against American personnel in Colombia, and advised that the United States was also his enemy, stating that the FARC's fight against the United States was also his fight. During the meeting, Bout also offered to provide people to train the FARC in the use of the arms.

The Indictment unsealed today charges Bout with four separate terrorism offenses:

Count One: Conspiracy to kill United States nationals;

Count Two: Conspiracy to kill United States 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.

If convicted, Bout faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment on each of Counts One through Three, including a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years' imprisonment for Count Three. Bout faces a maximum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment on Count Four. The case is assigned to United States District Judge Shira A. Scheindlin.

The United States is actively pursuing Bout's extradition from Thailand. Mr. Garcia praised the investigative work of the DEA and thanked the Royal Thai Police, Office of the Attorney General for Thailand, and the Royal Thai government for their assistance. Mr. Garcia also thanked the Romanian Border Police, the Romanian Prosecutor's Office Attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, the Korps Politie Curacao of the Netherlands Antilles, and the Danish National Police Security Services, for their cooperation, and thanked the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs.

"Viktor Bout has long been considered by the international community as one of the world's most prolific arms traffickers," said U.S. Attorney Michael J. Garcia. "Today, Bout is in Thai custody facing extradition to the United States, where he will be prosecuted for agreeing to arm a terrorist organization,

an aim of which was to kill American citizens."

"Viktor Bout no doubt faces some of the most extraordinarily serious conspiracy charges possible for his crimes against Americans," said DEA Acting Administrator Michele M. Loenhardt. "With the unsealing of this indictment, we are one step closer to ensuring Bout has delivered his last load of high-powered weaponry and armed his final terrorist."

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Anjan Sahni and Brendan R. McGuire are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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