



Guilty! Viktor Bout the “Merchant of Death”

On Wednesday, November 2, Viktor Bout (left), the former Soviet military intelligence officer and international arms dealer on trial for attempting to sell weapons to communist FARC terrorists, was found guilty in the Federal District Court in lower Manhattan. The verdict and possible life sentence, expected to be announced in February 2012, brings an end to the three-week-long trial that may perhaps go down as the of the most important case in years, highlighting the link between Moscow and international terrorism under the covert guise of spreading communism.



“Viktor Bout is key in all this,” says “Jimmy from Brooklyn,” frequent radio caller in the New York area and renowned expert on communism and the USSR. “Bout connects Russia to Marxist and Muslim terrorism,” Jimmy said.

“How does a Soviet military officer go from being a military intelligence officer to becoming in charge of an international air freight company selling arms over night, unless he was working for the Russian government?” Jimmy asked rhetorically when interviewed by *The New American* magazine.

In 1991, just as the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were officially dissolving after decades of relentless dictatorial communist oppression, Bout, 24 at the time, reportedly resigned from his service in the GRU or *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye*, the foreign military intelligence directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army. Bout left the GRU and started his own air shipping company using Soviet Ilyushin Il-76 cargo planes left behind as a result of the collapse.

Bout used the planes to transport overstock Soviet weapons that his company sold to terrorist groups and despotic regimes, many of which had been former clients of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The vast overstock of Soviet weapons were allegedly transported to countries around the world via Bout’s fleet of Ilyushin cargo planes.

Brendan McGuire, the prosecutor in the case, accused Bout of intending to use his planes to deliver arms to FARC operatives, which were actually undercover DEA agents that Bout believed to have been actual FARC operatives at the time of his arrest in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2008.

Despite Russian objections, Bout was then extradited to the United States where the [Justice Department indicted](#) him on four separate terrorist offences:

- 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.



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on November 4, 2011

Bout was found guilty on all four of these charges this week in a New York federal court. Heather Hobson, one of the jurors in the case, told [The New York Times](#), “He was convicted by his own words.”

The one “crucial piece of evidence,” according to Hobson in the *Times*, was “the transcript of a January 2008 telephone call between Mr. Bout and his former associate Andrew Smulian, a government witness, after a meeting between the two men in Moscow.”

Andrew Smulian, who was also arrested with Bout in the undercover sting operation in Bangkok in March 2008, testified against his former associate.

Smulian told the jury that Bout would approve selling the arms “if the FARC were genuine in their interest.” He went on to explain Bout’s motive for selling arms to the FARC: “Because they were Communists, the defendant could offer them assistance.”

A similar testimony was given by Louis Milione, the undercover DEA agent responsible for Bout’s arrest in Bangkok. In a CBS television interview aired on *60 Minutes*, Milione recounted that Bout told him that he would be able to supply “anti-personnel mines. Fragmentation grenades. Armor-piercing rockets. Money laundering services. And all within the context of speaking about a *shared ideology of communism* and fighting against the Americans.” (Emphasis added).

According to Hobson, Bout maintained a “deadpan” expression and “very intense, furious” eyes upon hearing the verdict.

“He’s a very scary man,” Hobson said.

After the case, Bout’s attorney Albert Dayan told reporters, “We can appeal to this judge that the verdict was rendered against the weight of the evidence, and then we can also proceed to the United States Court of Appeals.”

An appeal is unlikely to be successful. Bout’s sentence will be announced in February and is expected to face up to a life in prison. Nevertheless, the Russian government, along with Bout’s family, maintains his innocence and intends to continue their efforts to convince U.S. officials to release Bout back to Russia.

For now, Bout will no longer be proliferating violence and communism as he spends his time behind bars awaiting final sentencing.

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



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