



## Lords of Chaos: The Kremlin's Arms Merchants

"There are over 550 million firearms in worldwide circulation. That's one firearm for every 12 people on the planet. The only question is: how do we arm the other 11?" said the gun-running protagonist in the 2005 Nicolas Cage film *Lord of War*.

The filmmakers based that character in part on real-life weapons dealer Viktor Bout, a former Soviet officer turned arms merchant on the black market. But was he just a businessman seeking a quick profit, or is there more to the story? The *New American* has previously reported on Bout's ties to Russian intelligence, as well as his role in simultaneously arming both U.S. forces and its terrorist targets.



### **Viktor Bout**

Bout was certainly a busy man spreading chaos around the world, and his list of clientele reads like a who's who list of some of the worst scourges on the planet. Senior TNA Editor William Jasper reported that Bout "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."

Peter Hain, the British Foreign Office minister for Europe, had publicly denounced Bout's actions on the international stage for their devastating impact. "The murder and mayhem of UNITA in Angola, the RUF in Sierra Leone and groups in Congo would not have been as terrible without Bout's operations," Hain told reporters.

Bout's business dealings were as deplorable as they were expansive. Inter Press Services (IPS) reports that "Bout was the biggest operator in the African arms market. He ran a myriad of companies employing an estimated 300 people. The companies operated 40 to 60 aircraft, including the world's largest private fleet of Russian-made Antonov cargo planes."

Bout was able to mostly operate freely around much of the world until 2002, when allegations arose that he had helped arm the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ironically, even with such knowledge, the United States still utilized Bout's services for their efforts in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The *New Republic* reported that Bout's clients included "the U.S. military and its contractors in Iraq, NATO forces in Afghanistan, and the United Nations in Sudan."

How was Bout able to provide such advanced weaponry all over the world? Even though Bout claims independence, there is good reason to believe he had help from Russian intelligence agencies every step of the way. Douglas Farah, co-author of a book on Bout entitled *Merchant of Death*, claimed that it "is highly unlikely he could have flown aircraft out of Russia and acquired huge amounts of weapons from Soviet arsenals without the direct protection of Russian intelligence, and, given his background, the GRU (Russia's largest foreign intelligence agency) seems the most likely candidate. He was providing not solely AK-47s and massive amounts of ammunition, as his competitors were, but attack



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helicopters, anti-aircraft systems, anti-tank mine systems, sniper rifles, and items that are much harder to acquire." Farah also wrote that "Bout, who has armed rebels, criminals and terrorists from the Taliban in Afghanistan to the RUF in Sierra Leone to the FARC in Colombia, *has always operated under the protection of Russian military intelligence.*" (Emphasis added.) It is reasonable to conclude that if the GRU was protecting Bout, as well as supplying him with hard-to-obtain weaponry, then it must have not only condoned his actions but actually sanctioned them.

Bout had very extensive ties dating back years with Russian intelligence that also overlapped with organized crime syndicates of Russian origin. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) interviewed several sources within the black market of weapons smuggling who spoke of Bout's "deep connections" with Ernst Werner Glatt, allegedly one of Washington's favorite gunrunners during the Cold War. According to the ICIJ, Glatt, who is often described as a "right-winger," was very "tight with the KGB," with alleged close ties "to the director of Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs, Maj. Gen. Vladimir Marchenko."

Will the lingering questions regarding Bout's activities and a Kremlin connection ever be answered? There is a chance that the world might soon have an opportunity to find out exactly how close those ties are. Bout was captured in Bangkok, Thailand, in an elaborate sting set up by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). Bout stands accused of trying to sell millions of dollars' worth of weapons to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). American authorities have been asking for Bout to be extradited back to the United States to stand trial, but Russian authorities are aggressively opposed to the extradition requests and any attempts to tie Russia to global terrorism. The Kremlin won a significant victory on August 11, when a Thai court ruled against the U.S. extradition request. However, a U.S. appeal has delayed Bout's release for at least another month. But with his apparent ties to Russian intelligence, U.S. intelligence, and global criminal networks, will those who could be implicated allow the truth to come out? Regrettably Bout is not an isolated case. There are numerous other similar stories of gun-running "former" Soviet agents with rumored connections to Russian intelligence supplying arms to some of the world's worst terrorists.

### **Leonid Minin and Semyon Mogilevich**

Leonid Minin is another example of an infamous gunrunner with shadowy ties to Russia's levers of powers. Minin, shares many of the same traits as Bout. A mover in the Ukraine's "Odessa Oil Mafia," Minin branched out into trafficking in drugs, diamonds, and arms. Moving from the Ukraine to Israel in the 1970s, he obtained Israeli citizenship and added Tel Aviv to a global corporate network that would grow to include offices in Moscow, Beijing, Odessa, Monaco, Gibraltar, Milan, Zug (Switzerland), and Monrovia (Liberia). Minin made fortunes shipping weapons into African nations and stoking the fires of chaos, genocide, and revolution. But as in the case of Viktor Bout, it strains credulity to suggest he could operate so freely for so long throughout Eastern Europe and have access to such enormous quantities of Soviet arms without having high-level ties to present-day Russian intelligence.

The Russian Mafia, more accurately referred to as "the Red Mafiya," has been quite active since the collapse of the USSR. Their worldwide criminal networks have reached into almost every country on Earth and fueled calls for greater international "cooperation" in law-enforcement efforts. The typical news story on their crime waves treats them as independent actors simply seeking black-market profits. But it would appear that the Red Mafiya, among which Viktor Bout was considered a high-profile associate, still has ties to Russian intelligence agencies as well. Consider the case of Semyon Mogilevich, a Ukrainian-born Mafia don believed by most European and United States law-enforcement



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agencies to be the “boss of bosses of most Russian Mafia syndicates in the world.” Mogilevich, nicknamed “The Brainy Don” because of his business prowess and economics degree, is notorious for both the far reach of his crime network as well as his ruthlessness.

The FBI claims Mogilevich created a powerful Eastern European organized crime enterprise involved in “drug and weapons trafficking, prostitution and money laundering, and organized stock fraud in the United States and Canada in which investors lost over 150 million dollars.” But was Mogilevich acting independently, or was he a Russian asset?

Mogilevich operated freely out of Russia, and even though he was recently arrested, the Russian authorities freed him because, according to Irina Dudukina, a spokeswoman at the Interior Ministry’s Investigative Committee, the charges “are not of a particularly grave nature so investigators had no particular reason to keep [him] imprisoned.”

### **Fuel for Global Gun Control**

All of these facts beg the question, *what is going on?* If Russia is still playing an active role in stirring up global terrorism, then why is the United States trying to work more closely with Russia than ever before? If the United States is serious in its global war on terror, why is it wasting valuable resources and lives fighting no-win wars against the mere clients of the Russian regime? Perhaps an answer can be found in reviewing the analyses of mainstream journalists, authors, and researchers who report on the subject, which all follow a common theme. The narrative goes like this: the collapse of communism in 1991 allowed unbridled capitalism to run amok, which enabled ruthless criminals to exploit the developing world and who are in turn fueled by the “triumphant material affluence of the West.” How’s that for a global guilt trip?

And what is their proposed solution? Globalists are using the stories of Bout, Mogilevich, Minin, and their ilk to garner international support for a new, robust effort at global arms control to be administered through the United Nations. The arms-control campaign, which is run jointly by International Action Network on Small Arms, Amnesty International, and Oxfam International, proposes a “global legally binding agreement referred to as an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)” that would “prevent unscrupulous arms suppliers finding



the weakest point in the supply chain, and ensure that all arms exporters and importers are abiding by the same high standards regarding the use, management and transfer of arms, leading to a more secure world.” The website for their campaign features the notorious sculpture of a pistol with its barrel tied into a knot that is prominently displayed outside the UN building in New York City. A review of their key principles reveals vague wording that allows liberal interpretation to expand the power of an international organization to intrude upon sovereign states and revoke the citizens’ “right to bear arms.”

Ben Case, writing for IPS, reports, “The Arms Trade Treaty would set up a risk assessment system to determine the legality of an arms transfer on a case-by-case basis, based on the likelihood the weapons would be used to harm civilians or in some way other than national defense or law enforcement.” Without delving into a lengthy analysis of that proposal, it isn’t a far stretch to see the dangers inherent



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with empowering foreign bureaucrats to have oversight regarding individual gun purchases on a “case-by-case” basis. The “or in some other way” phrasing seems wildly open ended and could possibly allow for a de facto global gun ban among those whom the political elite deem not to be serving “national defense or law enforcement,” which is simply code for whatever is in the political elite’s best interests.

And it doesn’t just end at gun control; new calls for “harmonization” of law-enforcement efforts between nations, and more centralization at the UN, accompany almost every exposé on these Russian assets. Along these lines, the International Criminal Court has been empowered to prosecute thugs such as former Liberian tyrant Charles Taylor, one of Bout’s and Minin’s most insatiable customers. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) now claims as its mission providing aid to more than 26 million people in more than 100 nations displaced by wars and coups facilitated by the Kremlin’s chaos makers. The UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) spend billions of dollars on these refugee camps, many of which feature terrorist training schools with terrorist propaganda and textbooks paid for by UNRWA and UNHCR (thanks, in large measure, to U.S. taxpayers). The UN has been further empowered by the proliferation of so-called UN peacekeeping and nation-building forces deployed to deal with all of the bedlam created by Russia’s agents.

None of these proposed globalist “solutions” allows for consideration of an obvious option, which is for America to withdraw from these endless unconstitutional wars against Russian proxies, wars that have succeeded only in financially and militarily draining our resources while also making the United States despised in much of the world. Furthermore, analyses of war-torn regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, that simplify the source of the conflict down to an easy supply of guns overlook the other major cause, namely that Russian intelligence agencies are enabling terror-sponsoring states and revolutionary groups and regimes that are responsible for genocide and creating chaos throughout Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America — much as they did under the old USSR. It would appear as the old saying goes, “as much as things change, they stay the same.” America would be wise to acknowledge this sponsorship and to stop both falling into their traps by engaging in these unnecessary conflicts, as well as avoiding any unconstitutional globalist scheme to infringe on the rights of our citizens.

— Photo of Viktor Bout: AP Images



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