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## Russian “Merchant of Death” Still Held in Thailand

Sometimes Bout has armed both sides (or multiple sides) in these frequently genocidal rampages, operating through a constantly changing array of shell companies based in Russia and the United Arab Emirates. He is said to be the “inspiration” for the arms dealer portrayed by Nicolas Cage in the 2005 film *Lord of War*.

On March 6, Viktor Bout was arrested by Thai police in Bangkok, in a sting operation set up by U.S. DEA agents. An indictment announced by the U.S. Justice Department on May 6 charges Bout with conspiring to kill Americans and conspiring to sell missiles, arms, and munitions to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a communist narco-terror group.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who for years provided sanctuary to Bout, reportedly has been putting pressure on Thailand not to honor the United States’ extradition request for Bout. And according to a March 14 report by Bill Gertz in the *Washington Times*, “Russia’s government is quietly seeking [U.S.] State Department help in pressuring Thailand authorities into releasing arms dealer Viktor Bout from custody.” Putin’s reason for doing so is transparent: exposure of Bout’s key role in supplying Moscow’s ongoing global terror network would clearly undermine the carefully contrived image of Russia as our indispensable “partner” in the war on terror. Bout, who often is referred to in media accounts as a “Russian businessman” and a “former Soviet military officer,” is almost certainly an officer of the Russian GRU (military intelligence) and/or the KGB-FSB, as has been reported by intelligence analysts over the years.

What should be of most concern to Americans is the possibility that State Department officials eager to placate Putin and maintain the fiction of a U.S.-Russian alliance against terror may agree to an “escape” by Bout, or a soft prosecution that would let him off lightly — or a fatal “accident” that would permanently end the danger of Bout spilling the KGB beans.



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