

Texan Could Get Plea Deal in Smuggling Case

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NEW YORK — A Latvian-born woman who has drawn comparisons to Russian secret agent Anna Chapman could get a plea deal on charges that she tried to smuggle high-tech rifle sights to Moscow.

At a brief appearance Monday in a federal court in New York, lawyers on both sides indicated that a possible deal was in the works for Anna Fermanova.

Prosecutors said Fermanova, 24, was caught at New York's Kennedy Airport in March with the sights stashed in her luggage. Her lawyer, Scott Palmer, told reporters Monday that she bought the sights for her father-in-law to use at a Moscow gun club.

Fermanova, who was born in Latvia and grew up in Texas, has been under house arrest at her parents' home in Texas. A judge loosened the bail conditions on Monday to allow her to travel between Texas to New York for her case.

News reports and web sites have compared Fermanova to Anna Chapman, 28, who was among

suspects who pleaded guilty last month in New York to charges that they were part of a Russian spy ring. She was sent back to Russia as part of a spy swap.

Thanks to photos and information gleaned from social-networking sites, Chapman became a tabloid sensation. Fermanova has gotten the same treatment, even though there are no allegations of spying.

Fermanova has "laughed it off," her lawyer said when asked about the publicity.

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