The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Bout Files New Appeal

October 10, 2010



BANGKOK, Thailand — Accused arms trafficker Viktor Bout filed a last-ditch appeal Friday to try to stall his extradition to the United States, where he faces terrorism charges.

Bout's lawyer, Lak Nittiwattanawichan, said the Bangkok Criminal Court has not said whether it will agree to hear the appeal.

The effort would appear to lack legal standing, since the court's ruling Tuesday that Bout is seeking to appeal said prosecutors, rather than the defense, had the right to appeal.

The court's dismissal Tuesday of additional charges against Bout cleared the way for a previous ruling allowing the extradition to proceed. The earlier decision said the extradition must take place within 90 days, or by Nov. 20.

Anticipating possible problems, the prosecutor's office said Thursday that it would seek an extension of the deadline if necessary.

While the court rulings allow extradition, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has repeatedly said the final decision on whether Bout will be sent to the United States lies with his

government. He has expressed dissatisfaction that the United States and Russia, which opposes extradition, have tangled Thailand in a tug of war over Bout.

Bout, a 43-year-old former Soviet Air Force officer who is reputed to have been one of the world's most prolific arms dealers, was arrested in March 2008 in Bangkok as part of a sting operation led by U.S. agents.

A Thai court in August last year originally rejected Washington's request for Bout's extradition on terrorism-related charges. After that ruling was reversed by an appeals court in August this year, the United States moved to get him out quickly, sending a special plane to stand by.

However, just ahead of the appeals court ruling, the United States forwarded new money-laundering and wire fraud charges to Thailand in an attempt to keep Bout detained if the court ordered his release. But the move backfired, because it required a hearing on the new charges, which took place Tuesday.

The head of a lucrative air transport empire, Bout had long evaded UN and U.S. sanctions aimed at blocking his financial activities and restricting his travel. He claims he ran a legitimate business and never sold weapons.

Russia says Bout is an innocent businessman and wants him in Moscow. Experts say Bout has knowledge of Russia's military and intelligence operations and that Moscow does not want him going on trial in the United States.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/10/10/bout-files-new-appeal-a2054