

Arms Dealer Bout Urges U.S. Court to Reverse Conviction

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — Convicted Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout has asked a U.S. federal appeals court to overturn his conviction on charges of conspiring to kill Americans in a case he calls politically motivated.

Bout, whose 2011 conviction in the United States has been a sticking point in U.S.-Russian relations, said Thursday that he was a victim of "vindictive" prosecution and that he was groundlessly targeted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency at the behest of the White House, Reuters reported.

"It's seldom the DEA receives orders from the White House to deliver someone's head on a silver platter," Bout's attorney, Albert Dayan, said before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit in New York.

Bout, detained in a joint operation by U.S. and Thai authorities in Bangkok in 2008, was

sentenced to 25 years in prison after being convicted in November 2011 of conspiring to kill U.S. citizens and sell arms to Colombian militants. He has denied wrongdoing and called the trial politically motivated, a claim echoed by Russian officials.

US prosecutors accuse Bout of trying to sell arms to Colombian rebel group FARC, which would use the weapons to kill U.S. citizens. But Dayan told the three-judge panel Thursday that Bout was merely trying to sell cargo two cargo planes when he traveled to Thailand prior to his arrest, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The court did not appear to be receptive to the argument that Bout was wrongly targeted.

"Why shouldn't the government target him in the manner they did?", U.S. Circuit Judge Peter W. Hall said, according to the Journal, which added that Dayan declined to say whether Bout admitted to being an arms dealer.

U.S. Justice Department lawyer Anjan Sahni said Bout was targeted properly "because of the very clear and present danger he posed," Reuters reported.

"There's not remotely any abuse of discretion in this case," he said.

Russian officials have repeatedly described Bout's prosecution as political in nature and said Russia will do anything it legally can to have him sent home.

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