

Arms Dealer Viktor Bout 'in New Appeal' to U.S. Supreme Court

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Arms dealer Viktor Bout, sentenced to 25 years in prison for conspiring to kill U.S. soldiers, intends to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review his case, despite his wife saying recently that her husband had dropped plans to appeal.

Bout's newly-hired lawyer Alexei Binetsky indicated that his client's apparent one-eighty was linked partly to a desire for better prison conditions.

"As of today, Viktor is being held in a cell with highly dangerous criminals, including Islamic terrorists," Binetsky told Interfax Friday. The transfer petition would top the list of requests to be filed with the Supreme Court, he said.

However, "the main task today is to ensure that the Supreme Court reviews the evidence that wasn't taken into consideration by the court of original jurisdiction, and then forwards the case for a new hearing in a lower court," Binetsky said.

A three-judge panel at a U.S. appeals court rejected Bout's previous appeal in September, rejecting his argument that he was a victim of a "vindictive" prosecution and was entrapped by a law enforcement sting.

Bout's wife, Alla, said Tuesday that her husband saw "no point" in appealing the verdict again.

She also said her husband had fired his attorney and asked Binetsky to represent him, but didn't explain why.

Bout, 46, is serving his sentence in the so-called communications control unit of the Marion Penitentiary, some 500 kilometers south of Chicago.

"We will seek Bout's transfer to different prison conditions," Binetsky said. "In the U.S., they envisage a rather broad degree of freedom, in terms of food, access to media, to the gym, and communication and meetings with relatives."

Bout was convicted in 2012 for conspiring to kill U.S. soldiers and civilians by agreeing to sell weapons to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, which the U.S. considers a terrorist organization.

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