

Foreign Ministry Warns Against U.S. 'Hunt' For Russian Citizens

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Visiting the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor might become more difficult for Russian tourists in the future.

The Foreign Ministry has warned Russians against traveling abroad, saying that they could be arrested as part of a supposed U.S. "hunt" for Russian citizens in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

"The U.S. administration, groundlessly refusing to recognize the reunification of Crimea with Russia, which is in full compliance with international law and the UN Charter, is trying to make routine practice out of a 'hunt' for Russian citizens in third countries with the goal of their subsequent extradition and conviction in the U.S. on the basis of, as a rule, dubious charges," the ministry said Thursday in an online [statement](#).

"We strongly recommend Russian citizens refrain from traveling abroad, particularly to countries that have extradition treaties with the U.S.," the ministry said.

The statement also linked to a list of those countries with U.S. extradition treaties on the U.S. State Department's website.

The list covers much of the world, including a majority of European countries and two other popular vacation destinations for middle-class Russians — Turkey and Egypt.

Some of the exceptions that do not extradite to the U.S. are Andorra, the Vatican, several Balkan nations, a number of African countries, parts of the Middle East, such as Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as China, Indonesia and North Korea.

Warning that "'U.S.-style justice' is biased against Russian citizens," the ministry said the U.S. court convictions of arms dealer Viktor Bout and attempted drug smuggler Konstantin Yaroshenko showed Russians who travel overseas may be "effectively kidnapped and transported to the U.S." to face trial and conviction.

Bout was arrested in Thailand in 2008 during a sting operation for attempting to sell weapons to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which the U.S. considers a terrorist organization. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison for conspiring to kill U.S. citizens.

Yaroshenko, a pilot, was detained by U.S. law enforcement officers in Liberia in 2010 and sentenced to 20 years in prison for attempting to smuggle cocaine into the U.S.

Lawmakers from the ruling United Russia party recently proposed a bill that would limit Russian citizens' right to leave the country, seemingly reminiscent of the Soviet era when foreign travel was harshly restricted and exit visas were issued to only a select and carefully vetted few.

"We are not talking about exit visas yet, but we are working on it," one of the authors of the bill, State Duma Deputy Ivan Tyapa, told Moskovskiye Koroba web portal.

The number of Russians who view the right to "go to another country and come back" as a fundamental human right was 20 percent in January, a survey by the independent Levada pollster showed.

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