

# Ukraine Ramps Up Pressure Over 'Kidnapped' Female Pilot in Russia

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Activists hold placards and banners demanding the release of Ukrainian woman pilot, Nadezhna Savchenko, during a protest in Kiev, Ukraine.

Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko, whose arrest in Russia after her capture by separatists in Ukraine was seen as a sign of direct ties between Moscow and the pro-Russian rebels, says that she was smuggled across the border with a sack over her head and with her hands cuffed.

Savchenko, 33, who has been charged with abetting the killing of two Russian journalists in Ukraine, has been allowed to meet with Ukrainian Consul Hennadiy Breskalenko, the office of Ukraine's president said in a statement Wednesday. She has been in custody since mid-June.

Following the meeting, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry issued a statement demanding that Russia release Savchenko "without any conditions" and accusing Moscow of having "grossly violated the universal norms of international law in the sphere of human rights."

Savchenko told the Ukrainian consul that she was "illegally carried across the border with a sack over her head and in handcuffs," the president's office said, adding that her alleged abductors "changed cars several times" while en route.

Russia has claimed that Savchenko crossed the border on her own accord, posing as a refugee.

Russian investigators accuse Savchenko of providing "crucial information" that led to the deaths of journalists Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin of Russia's state-run broadcaster VGTRK during a shelling attack in Luhansk on June 17.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry statement said that Savchenko is in good health and told the consul that she has not been physically abused while in custody.

A video released prior to Savchenko's interrogation showed the pilot — an Iraq veteran and one of a handful of Ukraine's new generation of female soldiers — coolly brushing aside questions about government troops and positions, while she remained handcuffed to a metal pipe.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said that international pressure had "finally" persuaded Russia to grant permission for the consul to visit Savchenko.

The Wednesday visit took place while European leaders were meeting in Brussels to discuss a new round of sanctions against Russia over its meddling in Ukraine.

The European Union said it would publish details of its sanctions later this month, adding that the measures block European banks from financing Russian projects, the BBC reported.

The U.S. also expanded its previous sanctions Wednesday, targeting state-controlled oil giant Rosneft, defense firms and major banks such as Gazprombank.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow has called for the release of Savchenko, with spokesman Joseph Kruzich condemning her "kidnapping by separatists, her illegal transfer to Russian authorities and her prolonged detention," Russian newspaper Kommersant reported.

Ukraine has also accused Russia of "illegal trafficking" by taking the pilot across the border, and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has described the case as a "kidnapping."

**See also:**

[European Court to Consider Complaint of Ukrainian Pilot](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/17/ukraine-ramps-up-pressure-over-kidnapped-female-pilot-in-russia-a37413)

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