

'Missing' Ukraine Pilot Savchenko Held in Moscow for Psychiatric Testing

September 26, 2014



Nadezhda Savchenko, 33, was seized by rebels in June while she was fighting with pro-government militia on the outskirts of Luhansk on the border with Russia.

A Ukrainian military pilot charged with war crimes in Russia who disappeared off the radar earlier this week has been transferred to Moscow for a sanity check, her lawyers confirmed.

The whereabouts of Nadezhda Savchenko became the object of speculation after she was transferred from her detention cell in the southern city of Voronezh on Wednesday.

Prison officials offered no comment on her location, and her family was cited as saying she was being shipped to St. Petersburg.

But she was really sent to Moscow for a forensic psychiatric assessment, her lawyer Nikolai Polozov said, RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

Savchenko earlier refused to undergo forensic testing, and a second hearing to appeal the procedure has been scheduled for mid-October, reportedly with a delay because the pilot

caught a cold during her transfer to Moscow, RIA Novosti said.

Russian investigators have accused Savchenko of involvement in the death of two journalists working for the Russian state-run media holding VGTRK, who were killed during an artillery shelling in eastern Ukraine in June.

Savchenko has denied all charges and said she was first kidnapped and then illegally smuggled into Russia. Officials in Kiev have protested her detention, to no avail.

Savchenko tops the list of candidates with the Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party running in the Ukrainian parliamentary elections next month, giving her a good chance of gaining parliamentary immunity, which could protect her from prosecution in Russia.

Ukraine accuses Russia of backing pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine during a bloody five-month secession war that was put on hold with the signing of a shaky cease-fire earlier this month.

Russia has endorsed and glorified the rebels in the media, but has repeatedly denied providing them with military assistance.

Meanwhile, a prominent EU legislator known for her pro-Ukraine stance claims she was barred from entering Russia on Thursday while en route to attend a court hearing in Savchenko's case.

"I was told to take the next airplane back and any entry into Russia would be considered a criminal act," Rebecca Harms said on her Facebook page, after landing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

Russian culture news website Colta.ru said the German lawmaker, who heads the Green faction in the European Parliament, was declared "persona non grata." No official explanation was offered for the incident as of Thursday.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/09/26/missing-ukraine-pilot-savchenko-held-in-moscow-for-psychiatric-testing-a39814>