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Jailed Ukrainian Pilot Savchenko's Defense Announces Trial Date

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Ukrainian army pilot Nadezhda (Nadia) Savchenko speaks inside a defendants' cage as she attends a hearing at the Basmanny district court in Moscow on Feb. 10, 2015.

Ukrainian military pilot Nadezhda Savchenko will go on trial in Russia on Sept. 22, her defense lawyers said on Tuesday, more than a year after she was captured by Kremlin-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine and handed over to Moscow.

Savchenko faces 25 years in jail if found guilty of complicity in the killing of two Russian journalists in east Ukraine and of crossing into Russia illegally. She denies any wrongdoing, saying she was spirited into Russia by the rebels after being captured in a day-long battle in June 2014.

The 34-year-old's plight and defiant stance in captivity have made her a national hero in Ukraine, where she is considered a political prisoner. The West, as well as rights groups, have repeatedly called on Moscow to free her. Moscow says it is up to the court to decide her fate.

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