

Kremlin Spokesman "Unaware" of Possible Savchenko Swap

March 29, 2016



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he is unaware of a potential exchange of recently convicted Ukrainian ex-pilot Nadezhda Savchenko for Russian citizens jailed in the United States, the state-run TASS news agency reported Friday.

Reports had suggested that Savchenko — sentenced last week to 22 years in prison for her part in the deaths of two Russian journalists — would be the subject of a trade for Russian nationals Viktor Bout and Konstantin Yaroshenko, imprisoned in the United States.

“I have not heard anything about it. I saw the media reports, but I have no information whatsoever,” Peskov said, TASS reported.

“Russia has consistently voiced its objection to the extraterritorial spread of American law. In this regard, we consider the holding of Bout and Yaroshenko — Russian nationals in American jails — as unlawful,” he added.

Peskov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry discussed the issue of Bout and Yaroshenko last week, TASS reported.

“Russia continues to protect the interests of their citizens. In this precise context the names of Bout and Yaroshenko were brought up in talks with Kerry,” he said.

Kremlin chief of staff Sergei Ivanov said last week that a swap involving Savchenko for Russian nationals Alexander Alexandrov and Yevgeny Yerofeyev, on trial in Ukraine, is “theoretically possible” but only subject to a decision by Putin.

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