

Germany Extradites Cocaine Smuggling Suspect to Russia

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Alexander Scherbak / TASS

A German court has reportedly extradited the suspected mastermind of a busted South American cocaine-smuggling operation to Russia.

Five people were arrested in February following a year-long investigation after more than 350 kilograms of cocaine were discovered at the school grounds of the Russian Embassy in Argentina. Andrei Kovalchuk, who is suspected of being the supplier of the drugs, was arrested by German police in March.

Related article: [German Police Arrest Suspected Mastermind in Russian Embassy Cocaine Scandal](#)

"Kovalchuk has been extradited from Germany to Russia... He has been charged with smuggling drugs," the state-run TASS news agency [quoted](#) Kovalchuk's lawyer, Vladimir

Zherebenkov, as saying Monday.

Zherebenkov [told](#) Novaya Gazeta that his client had been flown to Russia on Friday, more than a week before the deadline to appeal his extradition.

Kovalchuk has denied his guilt, maintaining that his shipment of expensive coffee and tobacco aboard a Russian presidential plane to Moscow from Argentina had been replaced by cocaine in a “provocation.”

One of the suspects detained in Russia [told](#) the court earlier in July that he had loaned Kovalchuk 12 million rubles (almost \$193,000) “to buy a batch of elite coffee.”

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