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Kremlin Allocates Money for Legal Fees of Russians Tried in U.S.

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The Russian government has earmarked funds to help pay the legal fees of Russian nationals standing trial in the United States in the wake of several high-profile legal cases.

In a government decree published Friday, the state said it would subsidize the Russian Association of Lawyers "to represent certain Russian citizens in U.S. courts on questions relating to the violation of their rights and freedoms." Russian officials have called the arrest of nationals including Maria Butina, who was charged in July with acting as an agent of the Russian government, as fabricated.

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The subsidy will pay the Russian nationals' legal fees, transportation, accommodation and other needs related to court proceedings. The Kremlin, according to the decree, also

guarantees to shoulder the costs of future class-action lawsuits.

“This may have to do with providing qualified legal assistance to those who are unable to afford these services,” the Vedomosti business daily quoted Nektorov, Saveliev & Partners lawyer Ilya Rachkov as saying.

He named drug-trafficking convict Konstantin Yaroshenko, arms-smuggling prisoner Viktor Bout and suspected foreign agent Maria Butina as the likely beneficiaries of the new appropriation.

“You need to have a lot of money or receive third-party funding to go to American courts, whether you’re a plaintiff or a defendant,” Rachkov was quoted as saying.

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