

Russia Seeks Long Sentences for Accused Argentina Embassy Cocaine Smugglers

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia's state prosecutor is seeking harsh prison sentences for the four defendants in a high-profile case of smuggling cocaine from the Russian Embassy in Argentina, the RBC news website [reported](#) Thursday.

Following a year-long investigation and a 1.5-year closed trial, four Russian suspects face 15-19 years in prison on charges of smuggling 389 kilograms of cocaine worth over \$60 million aboard a presidential plane from Buenos Aires to Moscow. Two other suspects are on trial in Argentina.

RBC reported that a prosecutor requested a 19-year prison sentence for Berlin-based premium goods salesman Andrei Kovalchuk, whom the authorities suspect of masterminding the cocaine smuggling operation.

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The prosecutor requested an 18-year sentence for the Ali Abyanov, the former superintendent at the Russian Embassy in Buenos Aires.

The prosecutor also requested 17 years and 15 years respectively for businessmen Vladimir Kalmykov and Ishtimir Khudzhamov, who were detained in Moscow while trying to recover the shipment from Russian Foreign Ministry storage.

A jury found the four guilty this week but recommended the judge hand out lighter sentences, according to RBC.

The defendants faced between 15 years and a life sentence under the drug-smuggling charges. All four had pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors also requested multimillion-ruble fines for the defendants, RBC reported.

Russian and U.S. investigative journalists have [accused](#) Russian law enforcement of failing to follow up on leads to find both the ultimate beneficiaries of the cargo and the source of funding to buy the cocaine.

The Daily Beast, which collaborated with Russian investigative outlet the Dossier Center, said it had obtained documents pointing to a “coverup” designed to protect government officials implicated in the scandal.

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