The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Swaps Ex-U.S. Marine Reed for Pilot Yaroshenko

April 27, 2022



Trevor Reed. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia exchanged jailed ex-U.S. Marine Trevor Reed for Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, who was in an American prison on drug smuggling charges, the Foreign Ministry in Moscow said Wednesday.

The surprise prisoner swap comes as Moscow and Washington's diplomatic relations crumble over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The exchange took place "as a result of a lengthy negotiation process," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Reed was brought to Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, where he boarded a flight to the U.S., while Yaroshenko is flying back to Moscow via Turkey, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Reed, 30, was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2020 on charges of assaulting a police

officer while drunk at a Moscow party.

Yaroshenko, 53, was detained in Liberia in 2010 and brought to the United States, where he was convicted the following year of smuggling cocaine in his planes to destinations in South America, Africa and Europe and sentenced to 20 years.

Both men have denied the charges against them.

Embed:

> Video of the US and Russia swapping former marine Trevor Reed, formerly imprisoned in Russia, for convicted drug smuggler Alexei Yaroshenko on a runway in Turkey. Real bridge of spies Cold War vibes pic.twitter.com/5iiURYie83
>
> — max seddon (@maxseddon) April 27, 2022

Reed had been one of three U.S. citizens fighting to be freed from detention in Russia, alongside fellow former Marine Paul Whelan and basketball star Brittney Griner.

He went on hunger strike in November 2021 to protest his jailing and his treatment in prison.

Reed's family has voiced increasing concern for his health in recent months, and U.S. Ambassador to Moscow John Sullivan said this month that he was hospitalized with tuberculosis-like symptoms.

"Our family has been living a nightmare. Today, our prayers have been answered and Trevor is safely on his way back to the United States," Reed's family said in a statement Wednesday.

Russia had called Yaroshenko's arrest "a kidnapping of a Russian citizen from a third country" and attempted to secure his release for years, including by unsuccessfully petitioning former U.S. President Donald Trump to pardon the pilot in 2017.

U.S. President Joe Biden said negotiations to secure Reed's release required "difficult decisions."

"The negotiations that allowed us to bring Trevor home required difficult decisions that I do not take lightly," Biden said in a statement. "His safe return is a testament to the priority my Administration places on bringing home Americans held hostage and wrongfully detained abroad."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/04/27/russia-swaps-ex-us-marine-reed-for-pilot-yaroshenko-a77513