

Russia Jails U.S. Teacher for 14 Years on Drug Charges

June 17, 2022



Marc Fogel was reportedly detained passing through customs at a Moscow airport in August 2021, when trained dogs were said to find marijuana and hash oil in his luggage. **video screenshot / Russian Interior Ministry**

A Russian court has jailed a former U.S. teacher and diplomat for 14 years on charges of “large-scale” drug smuggling and possession, media [reported](#) Thursday.

Marc Fogel was [detained](#) passing through customs at a Moscow airport in August 2021, when 11 grams of marijuana and eight grams of hash oil was reportedly found in his luggage.

He had worked at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow until May 2021, according to the Russian authorities. He then apparently took up a teaching job at the Anglo-American School of Moscow.

The Moscow region’s Khimki City Court handed down the verdict on charges of large-scale drug acquisition, manufacture, smuggling and possession, according to Interfax.

“U.S. citizen M.H. Fogel was sentenced to 14 years in a maximum-security prison,” the court was quoted as saying.

Interfax [reported](#) in April that Fogel had pleaded guilty to some of the charges but denied intent.

“Fogel said he needed it for medical purposes,” a member of Russia’s presidential human rights council and prison watchdog said at the time.

Fogel maintained that the marijuana was prescribed by a U.S. doctor and entered into his medical record after his spinal surgery, a member of Russia’s prison watchdog told media late last year.

He was reportedly unaware of Russia’s ban on medicinal cannabis.

Russia’s Interior Ministry had said the drugs were “expertly disguised” in a contact lens case and vape cartridges, both wrapped in plastic and “hidden” in his sneakers.

Fogel is among several Americans currently held in Russian prisons amid bilateral tensions, with former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan and basketball star Brittney Griner most prominent among them.

Another ex-Marine, Trevor Reed, was in April exchanged for Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, who was convicted in the U.S. on drug smuggling charges.

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