

Russia Jails Ex-U.S. Soldier for 13 Years on Drugs Charges

By [AFP](#)

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A former U.S. paratrooper and rock musician detained in Russia more than a year ago on drug charges was sentenced to 13 years in prison on Thursday, the Moscow court system's press service said.

Michael Travis Leake, who fronted the Moscow-based rock band Lovi Noch, was detained in June 2023 after prosecutors accused him of "organizing a drug dealing business involving young people."

Moscow's Khamovnichesky Court found him guilty of crimes connected to the sale of illegal narcotics, the court's press service said in a post on Telegram. He was sentenced to 13 years in a maximum-security prison colony.

Leake was jailed alongside Veronika Grabanchuk, another defendant convicted of drug

charges. Her relation to Leake was not immediately clear.

Arrests of U.S. citizens in Russia have increased in recent years, in what Washington sees as a Kremlin ploy to secure the release of Russians convicted abroad.

Among other American citizens held in Russian jails are former marines Robert Gilman and Paul Whelan, as well as journalists Evan Gershkovich and Alsu Kurmasheva.

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