



US and Russia Carried Out Prisoner Exchange In Finest Cold War Traditions

Description

RUSSIA: On April 27, 2022, Russia and the United States carried out a prisoner exchange in a time of high tensions. Russia exchanged **Konstantin Yaroshenko** for US citizen **Trevor Reed**, previously convicted and serving his sentence in the Russian Federation. The exchange was conducted on the territory of Turkey. The forthcoming exchange was kept secret by the both sides.

Konstantin Yaroshenko is a Russian pilot involved in a diplomatic incident between Russia and the United States. On 28 May 2010, he was arrested in Liberia as part of Operation Relentless on charges of preparing to transport large quantities of cocaine. He was later taken to the US and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by a US court on 7 September 2011.

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Yaroshenko claimed that he had not transported any cargo at all since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but worked as an expert on the technical condition of aircraft. Yaroshenko is the owner of Rostov-on-Don-based Russian airline CJSC Rostavia.

According to Yaroshenko's wife, he flew to Liberia on 18 May 2010 to negotiate a new contract, a country he had not previously been to. On May 28, 2010, Yaroshenko was arrested in the Liberian capital of Monrovia by officers of the National Security Agency of the Republic of Liberia (NSA) on charges of preparing to transport a large cargo of cocaine.

On 30 May 2010, Liberian authorities handed Yaroshenko over to officers of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), part of the US Department of Justice, on an arrest warrant issued by the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

On 1 June 2010, the US Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration reported the discovery of a network of traffickers planning to ship three large cocaine shipments totalling about 4 tons and valued at \$100 million from Colombia to Liberia and Ghana, supplied by the left-wing rebel group FARC.

On 19 July, the Russian embassy in Washington sent a note to the US State Department, pointing out

that it was unacceptable that the diplomatic services had not been informed in time about the detention of the Russian pilot. Russian diplomats argued that the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations had never been so seriously violated. U.S. intelligence services seized a Russian citizen in a third country for the first time to smuggle him to the U.S.

During his imprisonment, Yaroshenko complained many times about torture, beatings, and lack of medical care. He said he was forbidden to mention torture in the court.

Trevor Reed, for his part, is a 30-year-old former U.S. Marine who was arrested in Moscow, Russia while on a trip in August 2019. Reed, who grew up in California, was a Texas resident at the time of his arrest. In 2011, he enlisted in the Marines as an infantryman. Reed had been a Marine Presidential Guard. During the Obama administration, he was tasked with the protection of then Vice President Joe Biden at Camp David. Reed was discharged from the Marines in 2016.

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In the summer of 2020, Reed was sentenced to nine years in prison in Russia for assaulting police officers. According to his case, in August 2019, police received a report of a man arguing with two women in the street. Upon arrival, the patrol officers were unable to calm the American and decided to take him to the police station. Reed then hit one policeman in the car and assaulted the driver, creating an accident on the road.

Reed himself claimed that he had no recollection of what happened as he drank a litre of vodka that day. The court found that Reid had committed the crime while intoxicated. A medical examination confirmed that he had 3.033 ppm of alcohol in his blood at the time, corresponding to a degree of severe intoxication.

During his imprisonment, Reed did not complain of torture or beatings. However, Trevor Reed expressed complaints about the lack of medical care and symptoms of tuberculosis. The prison administration reported that suspicions of tuberculosis had not been confirmed.

The prisoner exchange was like being in a spy movie. It can be likened to a famed Cold War prisoner exchange on the so-called Bridge of Spies in Germany. The scene itself was reminiscent of the Steven Spielberg 2015 thriller Bridge of Spies, which depicted the Cold War prisoner exchange of U.S. Air Force pilot Francis Gary Powers and KGB spy Rudolf Abel in Germany in 1962

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The exchange took place on the runway of Istanbul airport. Reed got off the Russian plane with a significant luggage, while Yaroshenko had only a small bag in his hands. Prisoner escorts exchanged handshakes.

Later, on board the Russian plane, Yaroshenko showed bruises and abrasions from handcuffs on his hands and feet.

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