



Alleged 'Lord of War' Viktor Bout Praised YouTube Video on FARC

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Courthouse News Service on October 25, 2011 released the following:

“By ADAM KLASFELD

MANHATTAN (CN) – Viktor Bout beamed with excitement as he described an online video showing Columbian guerrillas loading explosives into gas tanks, a confidential informant testified at the suspected arms smuggler’s trial Monday. According to transcripts of secretly recorded conversations, Bout gushed, “Uh, I saw on YouTube, uh, gas tank system. Congratulations! Genius. Genius. Genius.”

The informant, a native of Guatemala, testified that Bout looked “emocional,” or excited, in describing the footage, which prosecutors displayed for jurors.

Bout, a Russian national, allegedly armed dictators, despots and warring factions through arms trades around the world. His exploits are said to be the inspiration for the Hollywood movie “Lord of War,” and were the subject of investigative journalist Douglas Farah’s book, “Merchant of Death.”

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration corralled him in a sting operation using undercover informants posing as members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), a left-wing guerrilla group.

The United States calls the FARC a foreign terrorist organization, giving federal prosecutors jurisdiction for criminal proceedings in the Southern District of New York.

One informant, Carlos Sagastume, has

testified for three days about the sting that snared Bout, who maintains that he stopped trading arms long ago to start an air transportation business.

Bout’s secretly recorded conversations with undercover informants in a conference room of Bangkok’s Sofitel hotel undercut that defense.

“It’s not, uh, business, it’s my fight,” Bout said on one tape. “Only hear that I’m, uh, fighting the United States ... for 10 to 15 years.”

Bout also gave the informants advice on how to disguise arms sales, Sagastume testified.

When guerrillas arrived at a warehouse, Bout urged them to “load up sacks of flour [and] load up fruit” like a “normal operation,” according to transcripts.

Thai authorities arrested Bout after he allegedly agreed to sell the informants millions of dollars in weapons.

As prosecutor Brendan McGuire wrapped up direct examination Monday, defense attorney Albert Dayan grilled Sagastume about the millions of dollars the government has paid him as an informant. “This is not your first fake FARC case?” Dayan asked.

“Sí, sí,” Sagastume replied, agreeing it was not.

He said the other case involved a man who was later convicted of conspiring to sell weapons to the FARC.

Unlike Bout, that defendant provided specifications for the weapons, wired two down payments for them, and examined the merchandise before being arrested, Sagastume said.

Dayan pressed Sagastume to agree that Viktor Bout never actually gave the

informants a “single bullet.”

After the defendant in the last “fake FARC case” was convicted, Sagastume received an additional \$7 million from the U.S. State Department, Dayan said.

Sagastume denied that the government’s payment affected his testimony in either case.

“I didn’t know the amount [the government would give] or what they were going to do,” Sagastume said through an interpreter.

The DEA has paid Sagastume \$200,000 for the Bout case.

“I don’t know if they’re going to pay me more,” he said.

When asked if he was “natural at improvising and exaggerating,” Sagastume partly agreed.

“Not at exaggerating,” he said. “Natural at improvising, perhaps, yes.”

His cross-examination continues today (Tuesday).”

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Douglas McNabb and other members of the U.S. law firm practice and write and/or report extensively on matters involving Federal Criminal Defense, INTERPOL Red Notice Removal, International Extradition and OFAC SDN Sanctions Removal.

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