
Ukrainian pilot Savchenko pardoned by Putin, swapped for 2 Russians

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Putin ratified Savchenko's pardon, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, adding that the Russian leader signed the document simultaneously with the arrival of Erofeev and Aleksandrov in Moscow.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko also signed a decree to pardon Russian citizens Evgeny Erofeev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov. The decree is dated May 24.

Savchenko has already been delivered to Kiev on a Ukrainian plane.

[@RT.com #Savchenko](http://on.rt.com/7do6) back in Ukraine after swap deal between Moscow & Kiev <http://on.rt.com/7do6>



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In March, a Russian court found Ukrainian pilot Savchenko guilty of murdering Russian journalists Igor Kornelyuk and Anton Voloshin near Lugansk, eastern Ukraine, and of illegally crossing the Russian border.

According to prosecutors, she relayed the coordinates of a checkpoint where the two reporters were subsequently killed by the Ukrainian Aidar Battalion artillery fire near the town of Metalist in June 2014. The attack also resulted in the deaths of Ukrainian civilians. Afterwards, Savchenko illegally crossed the border into Russia.

Russian citizens Evgeny Erofeev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov were sentenced in Ukraine in April to 14 years each in prison after a district court in Kiev found them guilty of terrorist activities.

Both Erofeev and Aleksandrov maintain their innocence. The two men were captured in Donbass in May 2015, with Kiev claiming they were Russian servicemen. The Russian Defense Ministry officially denied the allegations, stating that neither Erofeev nor Aleksandrov was serving in the Russian Army at that time.

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When the aircraft with Aleksandrov and Erofeev landed in Moscow, their wives, Ekaterina and Yulia respectively, were there to meet them.

"We were waiting for them, we were very worried and hoped for their return," Yulia Erofeeva said.

It has been revealed that in March, relatives of the slain journalists, Kornelyuk and Voloshin, addressed Putin with a plea to pardon Savchenko.

The president met with Kornelyuk's widow, Ekaterina, and Voloshin's sister, Maryana, on Wednesday to personally express his gratitude for their position.

"I want to thank you for your position and express hope that such a decision, motivated by humanitarian considerations in the first place, will lead to a de-escalation of the confrontation in a certain conflict zone and will help to avoid similar terrible and needless losses. Thank you very much," Putin told the relatives of the deceased journalists.