# US Army Staff Sgt. Gordon Black Sentenced to 3 Years and 9 Months in Russian Court for Theft and Threats of Murder



A Russian court in Vladivostok sentenced U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Gordon Black, 34, to three years and nine months in prison for theft and threats of murder. The sentencing on June 19, 2024, stems from an incident earlier in the year when Black allegedly stole 10,000 rubles (approximately $115) from his girlfriend Alexandra Vashchuk, and threatened her life.

Black was detained on May 2, 2024, after traveling to Vladivostok from South Korea, where he had been stationed at Camp Humphreys. The U.S. Army stated that Black did not seek mandatory clearance for this international travel. Black partially admitted to the theft but denied intent to commit murder.

The Pervomaisky District Court also ordered Black to pay 10,000 rubles in damages in addition to his imprisonment. Prosecutors had initially sought a longer sentence of four years and eight months.

The case occurs amidst heightened U.S.-Russia tensions, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Several Americans, including Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich, are currently detained in Russia, which has complicated diplomatic relations. The U.S. State Department continues to caution against travel to Russia.

Black's defense plans to appeal the verdict, while his mother claims he was set up by Vashchuk. This case adds to the complex landscape of U.S. citizens imprisoned in Russia, underscoring the strained diplomatic ties between the two nations.