

# [***Who Is Gordon Black? US Army Officer Arrested During Secret Russia Trip***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BYX-FRJ1-JBR6-9006-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** The staff sergeant reportedly made an unauthorized trip to the Pacific port city of Vladivostok, where he was detained.

**Body**

The U.S. Army has confirmed that an American serviceman—Staff Sergeant Gordon Black—was arrested last week during an unauthorized visit to the Russian far eastern port city of Vladivostok.

Black, 34, had been stationed in South Korea and was in the process of returning home to Fort Cavazos in Texas when he made the trip to Vladivostok—which sits close to the Chinese and North Korean borders on the Sea of Japan—according to the Associated Press.

He did so without approval from superiors and is believed to have made the trip to visit a woman he was romantically involved with, [*NBC*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/nbc?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) News reported. U.S. officials told NBC that Black was accused of stealing from a woman.

U.S. Army spokesperson Cynthia O. Smith said in a statement that Black had been detained "on charges of criminal misconduct."

"The Russian Federation notified the U.S. Department of State of the criminal detention in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations," Smith said. "The Army notified his family and the U.S. Department of State is providing appropriate consular support to the soldier in Russia."

"Given the sensitivity of this matter, we are unable to provide additional details at this time."

A White House National Security Council spokesperson told The Hill that the State Department "is actively seeking consular access to this individual, who was not in Russia on behalf of or in affiliation with the U.S. government."

Russian news Telegram channels [*including Baza*](https://t.me/bazabazon/27558?single) reported that Black had been serving in the South Korean port of Pyeongtaek when he met a Russian woman, who moved back to Vladivostok. Black visited the woman recently, during which time they argued. Gordon is accused of attacking the woman and stealing 200,000 rubles; around $2,200.

A State Department spokesperson confirmed to *Newsweek* early on Tuesday that "a U.S. citizen has been detained in Russia. When a U.S. citizen is detained abroad, consular officers seek to aid him or her with all appropriate assistance. We take seriously our commitment to assist U.S. citizens abroad and provide all appropriate assistance.

"We have no higher priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas," the spokesperson said. "We reiterate our strong warnings about the danger posed to U.S. citizens inside the Russian Federation. U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Russia should depart immediately, as stated in our travel advisory for Russia.

"Due to privacy and other considerations we have no further details to provide at this time."

The Russian foreign ministry's Vladivostok office told the state-run Tass news agency on Tuesday that the case "has no relation to ***politics*** or espionage." The office added: "As far as we understand, a household crime [is suspected] in this case. That is why the Russian foreign ministry's mission in Vladivostok is not following the case of the U.S. citizen closely."

Russian authorities have arrested multiple U.S. citizens in recent years, accused by Washington, D.C., of doing so intentionally to gain more leverage in a bilateral relationship that has deteriorated to its lowest point since the Cold War.

Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a post shared on X—formerly known as Twitter—that he was "deeply concerned" by the reports.

"Putin has a long history of holding American citizens hostage," McCaul said. "A warning to all Americans—as the State Department has said, it is not safe to travel to Russia."

The State Department currently suggests that Americans do not travel to Russia, and that those that do "exercise increased caution due to the risk of wrongful detentions."

"Do not travel to Russia due to the unpredictable consequences of the unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine by [*Russian military*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/russian-military?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) forces, the potential for harassment and the singling out of U.S. citizens for detention by Russian government security officials, the arbitrary enforcement of local law, limited flights into and out of Russia, the Embassy's limited ability to assist U.S. citizens in Russia, and the possibility of terrorism," the travel warning, last updated in September 2023, reads.

"U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Russia should depart immediately."

*5/7/24 5:50 a.m. ET: This article has been updated to include comment from the State Department.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2388920/vladivostok-russia-pictured-september-2023.jpg)

**Graphic**

Vladivostok Russia pictured in September 2023

NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/AFP via Getty Images

A photo shows the view from an observation point in the Russian port city of Vladivostok, on September 13, 2023. A U.S. Army officer was arrested in the city last week during an unauthorized visit, the military has said.

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