

. There has been no word from the Kremlin on Whelan's arrest. # Questions have persisted about whether the arrest amounted to retaliation for the U.S. conviction of Butina. # In December, Butina pleaded guilty to conspiring with a senior Russian official to infiltrate U.S. conservative groups. Butina, 30, is the first Russian national to be convicted of seeking to influence U.S. policy in the run-up to the 2016 election by acting as a foreign agent. # Shortly before Butina pleaded guilty, Russian President Vladimir Putin said she was not known to any of his spy agencies. The Foreign Ministry has gone to great lengths to paint Butina as a political prisoner, notably by launching a wide-ranging social media campaign. # "We don't agree with individuals being used in diplomatic chess games," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told Sky News. "Because it is desperately worrying, not just for the individual but their families, and we are extremely worried about him and his family as we hear this news." # Julie Tate contributed to this report. Ferris-Rotman reported from Moscow.