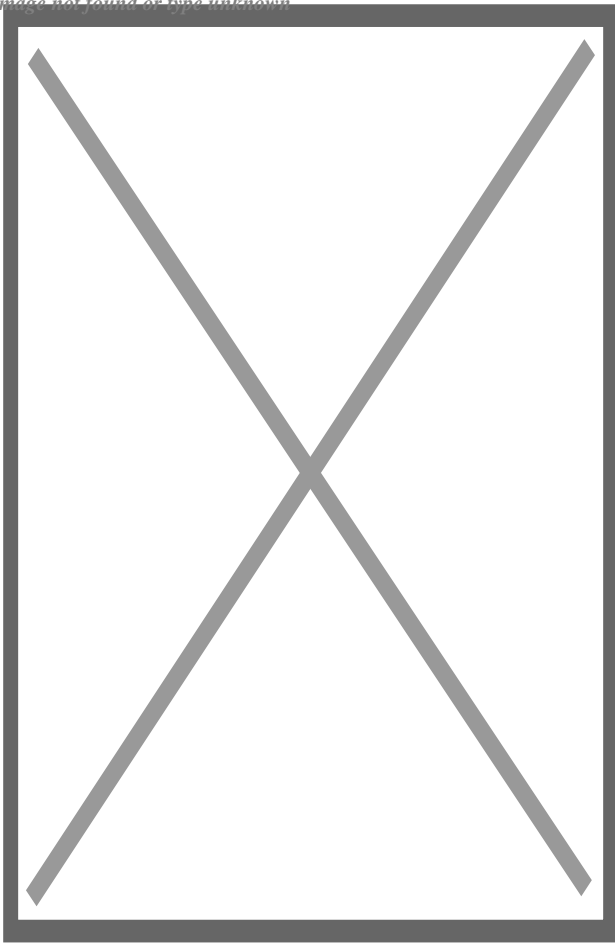


U.S. authorities take Scott Ritter off plane to Russia and seize his passport

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Former U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Officer and UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter

New York, June 5 (RHC)-- The U.S. Department of State has prohibited former Marine Corps intelligence officer and American foreign policy critic Scott Ritter to board a flight from New York to Istanbul.

Ritter, who is a strong critic of U.S. foreign policy particularly on Israel and has supported the Palestinian resistance, was planning to travel to Russia to participate in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum as a guest speaker.

"I was boarding the flight. Three [police] officers pulled me aside. They took my passport. When asked why, they said 'orders of the State Department.' They had no further information for me," Ritter told RT on Tuesday.

"They pulled my bags off the plane, then escorted me out of the airport. They kept my passport," he added.

Ritter further told Sputnik that he thinks U.S. authorities prevented him from traveling because they are afraid of his participation in the event. The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum is set to take place on June 5th through the 8th. This year's event is titled "The Foundations of a Multipolar World - The Formation of New Areas of Growth."

The U.S. State Department declined to comment on the matter. "We cannot comment on the status of the passport of a private U.S. citizen," a State Department spokesperson told Russia's Tass news agency.

Scott Ritter has condemned Israel's aggression and noted that if the international community holds the U.S. accountable for the Israeli genocide of Palestinians, then maybe the United States will realize that supporting Israel is a losing proposition.

Ritter is author of "Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika: Arms Control and the End of the Soviet Union."

He served in the Soviet Union as an inspector implementing the INF Treaty, served in General Schwarzkopf's staff during the (Persian) Gulf War, and from 1991 to 1998 served as a chief weapons inspector with the UN in Iraq.

Ritter currently writes on issues pertaining to international security, military affairs, Russia, and the Middle East, as well as arms control and nonproliferation.

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