

FACT SHEET FOR REPORTERS

Michael “Travis” Leake, U.S. Air Force veteran, held in Russia

Michael “Travis” Leake, an American citizen and U.S. Air Force veteran from Bakersfield, California, has been held in Russia since June 6, 2023. Today is Day 1,213. He is serving 13 years at IK-6, a penal colony in Vladimir Oblast. His advocates have asked the State Department to designate him **WRONGFULLY DETAINED**. It has not, and no official has told his family why.

The court’s own 690-page file contradicts the case against him. Every fact below carries its page number so that anyone can check it.

Case facts

NAME	Michael “Travis” Leake
CITIZENSHIP	United States (born Bakersfield, California, October 15, 1971)
SERVICE	U.S. Air Force, 1989-90, 832d Civil Engineering Squadron, Arizona
DETAINED	June 6, 2023, Moscow
COURT	Khamovnichesky District Court, Moscow · case 12301450020000355
COUNTS	Five, under Articles 30, 228 and 228.1 of the Russian Criminal Code. Pleaded not guilty.
SENTENCE	13 years, strict-regime colony, July 18, 2024
APPEALS	Upheld by the Moscow City Court, April 10, 2025; cassation denied, October 2025
HELD AT	IK-6, Melekhovo, Vladimir Oblast
DESIGNATION	Not designated. Requests filed June 2024, February 2025 and September 2026.

How to describe him

American citizen; U.S. Air Force veteran; musician and English teacher; held at IK-6, Melekhovo; sentenced to 13 years by Moscow’s Khamovnichesky District Court on July 18, 2024.

DO NOT USE

paratrooper · combat or Iraq veteran · proven drug dealer · officially designated

Service record

U.S. Air Force, 1989-90, 832d Civil Engineering Squadron, Arizona, heating-and-air-conditioning mechanic. Never a paratrooper. Never in combat. The “former paratrooper” label came from Russian court officials and state television at his arrest; independent reporting corrected it within days.

“What I am not is a drug dealer, and there is no reason for me to be here.”

TRAVIS LEAKE, RECORDED APPEAL TO PRESIDENT TRUMP, SUMMER 2026

From the 690-page court file

FINDING 01

At trial, the witness who ties him to the sale charges said police told her to report more about him than she had.

Defense closing argument (certified translation), July 9, 2024, pp. 11-12; court file, Vol. 1, I.d. 4-5 [PDF pp. 9-11].

FINDING 02

Nothing seized was examined for fingerprints or DNA. No such test appears anywhere in the file.

Court file, Vol. 2, I.d. 218 [PDF p. 545] (Expert No. 1130), I.d. 188-190 [PDF pp. 510-513] (Expert No. 689); defense closing, p. 17.

FINDING 03

Police took his first statement with no lawyer present, in the 43 hours before any formal detention record was made. He withdrew it in writing.

Court file, Vol. 3, I.d. 15 [PDF p. 627]; Vol. 1, I.d. 133-134, 142-143 [PDF pp. 162-163, 171-172]; Vol. 3, I.d. 38-41 [PDF pp. 650-654].

FINDING 04

Police logged his black iPhone in the search protocol. It is absent from every evidence record that followed.

Court file, Vol. 1, I.d. 93 [PDF p. 117]; Vol. 2, I.d. 144 [PDF p. 463]; Vol. 2, I.d. 162-165 [PDF pp. 481-484].

FINDING 05

No drug found in his home was charged as intended for sale. The 13-year sentence is the sale case, and the sale case rests on one witness.

Court file, Vol. 3, I.d. 14-15 [PDF pp. 626-627] (charging decision); defense closing, p. 9.

FINDING 06

The bundle police attributed to him matches the courier’s own batch: tape around a grey magnet, 1.28 grams, the same as each of hers.

Court file, Vol. 2, I.d. 188-190 [PDF pp. 510-513], I.d. 218 [PDF p. 545]; defense closing, p. 17.

Court file citations are by volume and sheet (I.d.), with the page in the OCR PDF in brackets. Every finding, with its source, is at freetravisleake.com/the-case/. Photos and video: courtesy of the Leake family / Free Travis Leake campaign; free to use with credit.