

THAILAND REFUSES TO EXTRADITE VIKTOR BOUT

While this decision will be immediately appealed, in what was a proxy power fight, Thailand has refused to extradite Viktor Bout to the United States to be tried on charges of trafficking arms to terrorists—Colombia’s FARC.

The DEA maintains that Mr Bout agreed to supply ground-to-air missiles that could have been used to target agency operatives assisting Colombia’s attempts to wipe out cocaine crops.

But on Tuesday the court found in favour of Mr Bout.

“The US charges are not applicable under Thai law,” said the judge delivering the hour-long verdict at Bangkok’s Criminal Court. “This is a political case. The Farc is fighting for a political cause and is not a criminal gang. Thailand does not recognise the Farc as a terrorist group.”

The court “does not have the authority to punish actions done by foreigners against other foreigners in another country”, the judge said.

The FT goes on to describe allegations of attempts, by both the Americans and Russians, to bribe the judges in this case. Who knows the relative truth to that claim? But the decision is interesting because the Thais have thus far refused to follow US bidding in what is undoubtedly an attempt to shut down a horrible arms trafficker (though one we have used in the past), but is also an attempt to shut down a challenge to US influence in developing nations around the world.

And yes, I do find it ironic that Thailand—the

country that hosted Abu Zubaydah's torturers—has refused to accept our representations about who is, and who is not, a terrorist.