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World trek threatened by Russian court order

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — A British adventurer's attempt to walk around the world was in jeopardy Friday after a Russian court ordered him deported for entering the country illegally.

Russian officials told Karl Bushby he would not be permitted to return for at least another five years, a development that would end his quest, Bushby's father, Keith, told The Associated Press.

Seattle resident Dimitri Kieffer, who accompanied Bushby on his walk into Russia, also was detained but it wasn't certain whether he was also ordered deported.

Kieffer, a former Microsoft worker, quit his job to become an adventure traveler. In a recent e-mail to friends, Kieffer said he was working with the U.S. consulate to try to get released. He said, "We are obviously not allowed to leave the town of Lavrentiya, 1,200 inhabitants. They kept all our electronic gear, except headlamps, as well as our skis, poles, harnesses, dry suits, underwater gloves and sled. They also kept, obviously, the maps and gun, which I don't have any hope to ever see again."

Kieffer also said he was learning bits of Russian and listening to one radio station that plays a mixture of Russian music and American rap.

Keith Bushby said his son, who wants to be the first person to walk around the world — from South America to Alaska into Russia and then Europe — would appeal.

"It's not over yet," the elder Bushby said in a telephone interview. "He didn't come all this way to just give in easily."

Karl Bushby, 37, has walked 17,000 miles since he began his trip on Nov. 1, 1998.

He was detained for entering Russia without going through a border checkpoint on April 1 after a perilous 15-day trek across a 56-mile stretch of the frozen Bering Strait.



AP/ GOLIATH EARTH TREK UK

Seattle resident Dimitri Kieffer, left, and Briton Karl Bushby are shown before crossing a frozen stretch of the Bering Strait.

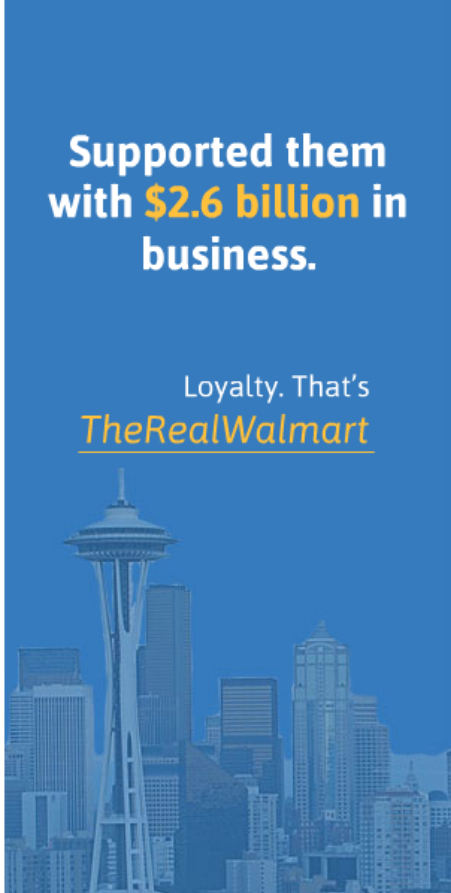
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"The full enormity of the situation hasn't struck him, I think," Bushby said of his son, a former British paratrooper. "It's like the death of a loved one; it takes time to sink in."

The court in the Russian Far East region of Chukotka ruled Friday that Bushby and Kieffer would be fined \$72 each and deported.

They have 10 days to appeal.

Keith Bushby said his son and supporters had hoped for intervention from Roman Abramovich, the billionaire Russian oil tycoon who is the governor of Chukotka and owner of Britain's Chelsea soccer club, but that they have been unable to reach him.

"It's easier to get to the queen of England," he said.

Bushby said his son was not surprised by the conviction, but that he had hoped that "given the unique circumstances, they might have shown some leniency."

The appeal could take up to four months to work its way through the court system.

Seattle Times staff reporter Susan Gilmore contributed to this report.

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