

Biased Ruling In an Absurd Coup Attempt

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Moscow City Court on Friday sentenced Vladimir Kvachkov, 64, a former military intelligence officer and leader of a fringe nationalist organization, to 13 years in a high-security prison for plotting to overthrow the government.

According to the court ruling, Kvachkov planned to seize the military training center in Kovrov, a small town in the Vladimir region, and incite a rebellion in Vladimir, a city of 345,000 located 180 kilometers east of Moscow. Uprisings were also planned in Voronezh, Samara, Khabarovsk and Vladivostok. Following these rebellions, the prosecution said Kvachkov and his supporters planned to seize Moscow.

The plot sounds too ridiculous to believe. Indeed, the case against Kvachkov has generated little interest among Russians. What's more, despite the general Kremlin policy of stoking fears of enemies inside and outside the country, even state-controlled television did not try to play the Kvachkov plot to its advantage.

Perhaps this is because the evidence against him was so unconvincing. The charges of plotting a coup were filed the day after Kvachkov was acquitted in June 2008 on charges of attempting to assassinate then-Unified Energy System chief Anatoly Chubais. The investigation into Kvachkov in the insurrection case was classified and conducted with help from the Federal Security Service. Moreover, the only weapons the alleged plotters had at their disposal were crossbows. Even if the aging Kvachkov and his pensioner accomplices dreamed of leading a national rebellion, it was obvious they had no chance whatsoever of succeeding.

Or perhaps Russians are simply accustomed to the fact that the authorities like to exaggerate the charges against people whom they are determined to prosecute at all costs. In the end, it isn't really important whether former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky really stole huge amounts of oil or Pussy Riot violated nonexistent blasphemy laws. At the end of the day, the court had to report to its higher-ups. Perhaps this is the best explanation for the heavy sentence in the Kvachkov case.

The public's indifference to Kvachkov's eccentric case speaks volumes about the lack of a threat it actually posed to the public. Sentencing the 64-year-old Kvachkov to prison for 13 years is yet another blow to Russia's reputation.

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