

Former Defense Official Vasilyeva Gets 5 Years in Prison

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Yevgenia Vasilyeva, former head of the Russian Defence Ministry's Property Relations Department, leaves the court room after a hearing in Moscow, Russia May 8, 2015.

Former Defense Ministry official Yevgenia Vasilyeva has been sentenced to five years in a penal colony, Russian media reported Friday.

Yevgeniya Vasliyeva, who worked as an aide to former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, was found guilty on eight charges including fraud, money laundering and exceeding and abusing her authority, the Russian Legal Information Agency (RAPSI) said.

Four others who worked with her at the state-run Oboronservis holding, where she controlled the sale of Defense Ministry property, — Larisa Yegorina, Maxim Zakutailo, Irina Yegorova and Yury Grekhnev — also received prison sentences, the most severe of which was four years and three months.

The group had faced allegations that Oboronservis sold off property cheaply, often to well-

connected insiders, depriving the state of 3 billion rubles (\$60 million).

Vasilyeva was taken into custody in the courtroom and is expected to serve 2 1/2 years in the penal colony, taking into consideration the time she has already spent under house arrest, news agency TASS reported.

The Moscow court also granted civil claims which had been filed against Vasilyeva and her accomplices seeking 215 million rubles in damages, it added.

The fraud, which was discovered in 2012, led to the resignation of Vasilyeva and then-Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov.

The prosecution had originally requested an eight-year sentence for Vasilyeva, but last month changed their mind and requested a 1 million ruble fine and a suspended sentence instead, according to Tass.

"Frankly, I am shocked. We are going to file an appeal," Vasilyeva's lawyer, Hasan-Ali Borokov, told reporters.

RAPSI said Vasilyeva and her accomplices were also convicted of conspiracy to commit the crimes and deceive Serdyukov, who was fired from his post as defense minister in November 2012 and suspected of negligence in using government funds for a private road.

Once seen as one of President Vladimir Putin's most loyal courtiers, Serdyukov was later granted an amnesty.

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