

Russian Radio Engineer Sentenced to 14 Years for Treason

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Kravtsov's sentence is the latest episode in a series of treason cases that have dramatically mushroomed since Moscow's international isolation began to deepen over the Ukraine crisis.

A Moscow court sentenced Gennady Kravtsov, a radio engineer and former employee of Russia's military intelligence services, to 14 years in a high security prison Monday for sending a job application letter to a Swedish defense company in 2010.

Kravtsov, who denies the charges, smiled slightly as the judge read out the sentence, which was just one year less than the 15 years requested by prosecutors.

Lawyers for Kravtsov, whom the court did not allow to call any witnesses or experts during the trial's six closed sessions, slammed the verdict.

"In a career spanning more than 20 years, I have never taken part in such cruel legal proceedings," said Kravtsov's lawyer Ivan Pavlov, a specialist in treason cases. "The verdict

was fully in line with the brutal, inquisitorial nature of the trial.”

Kravtsov’s sentence is the latest episode in a series of treason cases that have dramatically mushroomed since Moscow’s international isolation began to deepen over the Ukraine crisis. Russian officials now frequently characterize association with foreign organizations as a possible threat to national security.

During 15 years working as an engineer specializing in satellites for Russia’s GRU military intelligence, Kravtsov rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 2010 — five years after he quit the GRU — he e-mailed a job application to a Swedish defense firm that was unearthed by investigators in 2013. Kravtsov was arrested in May 2014.

Asked by the judge in Moscow City Court whether he understood the sentence, Kravtsov, who has two children aged 8 and 4, answered that it was “madness.”

There was little reaction from Kravtsov’s friends and family who had come to hear the sentence: Few had expected leniency. Filing out of the courtroom, Kravtsov’s sister called out to her brother: “Stay strong, don’t let them break you!”

Speaking to reporters afterward, Kravtsov’s wife Alla Kravtsova said her husband had “got almost 15 years for the 15 years that he had served [in military intelligence].”

Prosecutor Anna Degavina said she was satisfied with the outcome. “[Kravtsov] gave a foreign organization information about state secrets. This information was received by Kravtsov while he was serving in the military,” she told reporters.

Defense lawyer Pavlov said that his client would appeal the sentence, including appeals against at least four procedural violations he said the court had committed.

“It’s a sad decision today: The system has once again shown its brutal face, but we were prepared for this decision and we will continue to work,” said Pavlov.

In the sentence, the judge said that Kravtsov had confessed to being “partially guilty” during a conversation with investigators — an admission the engineer later retracted.

Pavlov said that this questioning had taken place in the presence of a state-appointed lawyer, Andrei Stebenev, who was disbarred earlier this year after he was found to have failed to provide proper legal support to Svetlana Davydova, a mother of seven who was arrested on treason charges. Davydova was released in February after Pavlov took on her case.

There were 15 treason convictions in Russia last year, compared to just four in 2013, according to Supreme Court data. All the convictions resulted in prison terms, and nine of the 15 convictions in 2014 resulted in prison terms of more than 10 years.

Pavlov said that the figure in 2015 was likely to be even higher.

“They like easy prey,” said Pavlov. “Comparing treason trials in the late 1990s and early 2000s and today is like comparing a girls’ high school with the GRU.”

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