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Ukraine Court Issues Arrest Warrant for Russian Vice Admiral

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Vice Admiral Alexander Vitko

A warrant for the arrest of Vice Admiral Alexander Vitko, commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, has been issued by a Kiev court, the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported Thursday.

He is under suspicion of committing serious crimes against Ukraine and hiding from investigating authorities, Interfax reported.

Because Vitko was "hiding from the investigating authorities in order to evade criminal responsibility," On April 26 the public prosecutor declared him a wanted man, Interfax reported, citing the press office of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General.

On April 27, following a petition from the Kiev prosecutor, the court issued an arrest warrant for Vitko primarily to rectify his refusal to appear in court, Interfax reported.

The Prosecutor General's Office spokesperson said that "following a preliminary trial investigation into the aggressive conduct and participation of the Russian Armed Forces

in the Ukraine crisis, which led to war, death and other serious consequences, it was suspected that Vitko had committed a number of crimes — some very serious against Ukraine and its own Black Sea Fleet," Interfax reported.

Vitko reportedly committed such crimes from Feb. 20 to March 21, 2014. He allegedly incited treason, organized attacks on locations of military importance and planned and prepared direct acts of aggression, Interfax reported.

The prosecutor's office is reportedly in possession of documents that implicate Vitko in the occupation and consequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, Interfax reported. Such a charge would call into question the agreement, made on Sept. 28, 1997, allowing the Russian Black Sea Fleet on Ukrainian territory.

Using powers bestowed upon him by Russian, Vitko allegedly led a unit of the Black Sea Fleet to blockade Ukrainian forces, transmit important information and capture key Ukrainian buildings. Such actions assisted in the "illegal occupation of Crimea," Interfax reported.

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