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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ex-Russian Church Employee Receives 12-Year Sentence For Treason

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A city court building is seen through its gate in Moscow.

Former Russian Orthodox Church employee Evgeny Petrin has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for treason, the RBC news website reported Tuesday.

The Moscow City Court fined Petrin 200,000 rubles ($3,000) after he was found guilty of passing state secrets to US intelligence agencies. He denies all the charges.

The case took place behind the closed doors due to the secret materials being discussed, RBC reported. Prosecutors initially asked the court to sentence Petrin to 19 years in prison.

Petrin's lawyer Ivan Pavlov said that they would appeal the decision in the Supreme court, which "is sometimes able to find a compromise," he said on Facebook.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled to reduce the sentence of former military intelligence engineer Gennady Kravtsov, who was also found guilty of high treason, from 14 to six years.

Petrin was arrested in June 2014 for allegedly leaking information on the Russian Orthodox Church while working in the Moscow Patriarchate's branch in Kiev. Petrin claims to have been working for the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) between 2011 and 2013, and said that he remained involved in counterintelligence while working in Kiev, the Meduza news website reported.

His brother Alexey claims that Petrin had managed to uncover a U.S. spy network inside the Russian Orthodox Church and had been working with those agents to draw out more information, Meduza reported.

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