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Putin Pardons Russian Woman Charged for 'Treasonous' Text Messages

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Oksana Sevastidi **Oksana Sevastidi / VK**

President Vladimir Putin has pardoned a Russian woman convicted of high treason in 2015 for sending two text messages to a friend living in Georgia.

Oksana Sevastidi sent messages concerning military equipment she had seen close to the Russian city of Sochi in April 2008.

Unbeknownst to Sevastidi, the equipment had been part of a build-up of troops at the Russian border in the run-up to the 2008 Abkhazia-Georgian War, which broke out just three months later.

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Russian security agents arrested Sevastidi in January 2015, claiming that the friend to whom

she had sent the messages had been a Georgian spy. She was eventually sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

Putin's pardon, which comes into force on March 12, 2017, says that it was signed on "the principles of humanity."

Sevastidi's lawyer, Yevgeny Smirnov, told the Interfax news agency that his client could not remember appealing to Putin for a pardon.

"Perhaps she was given a document to sign," Smirnov said. "At the same time, the president has the power to independently give clemency to anyone," he said.

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