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Russian Skier Found Guilty of Buying 'Spy Gadget' Goggles

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A Siberian skiing enthusiast has reportedly been found guilty of purchasing hi-tech goggles considered spy gadgets by Russia.

Russian law enforcement agencies estimate convictions for the "illicit traffic" of spy gadgets increased fivefold between 2011 and 2017. The Supreme Court said last month that the purchase of so-called spy gadgets cannot be prosecuted if the individual was "mistaken about their actual purpose."

Alexei Zhavoronkov was said to have ordered a $30 pair of ski goggles with a built-in camera from a Chinese online marketplace. Local media reported that Russian customs officials confiscated the gadget last fall because it contained unidentified "equipment banned in Russia."

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A district court sentenced Zhavoronkov to pay a fine of 15,000 rubles ($223), the Kemerovo region news website city-n.ru reported Sunday.

In denying his guilt, Zhavoronkov reportedly argued that he could not have violated the law because the equipment came without a memory card, meaning he "could not obtain any secret information."

The case follows a high-profile arrest and subsequent release last year of a Russian farmer who had ordered GPS trackers from China for his stray cattle.

In another prosecution involving China's AliExpress website, an American teacher faces 20 years in Russian prison for ordering a cleaning product containing a chemical banned in Russia.

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