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Jailed Russian Ex-Journalist Safronov Faces New Treason Charges – Lawyer

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Ivan Safronov was detained in July 2020 on suspicion of treason, a charge he denies. **Moscow City Court Press Office / TASS**

Prominent Russian ex-journalist Ivan Safronov faces new charges of treason, his former lawyer said Tuesday as reports indicated that authorities were wrapping up their investigation into his case.

Though case materials are classified, investigators allege that NATO recruited Safronov in 2012 and that he passed secret information on Russia's military activities in the Middle East and cooperation with African countries to Czech intelligence in 2017.

Related article: No Plea Bargain in Treason Case, Russian Ex-Journalist Safronov Says in Since-Deleted Column

But exiled lawyer Ivan Pavlov said investigators have filed new charges against Safronov on allegations that he passed information on Russia's military activities in Syria to Russian-

German political consultant Demuri Voronin in 2015.

Voronin, who was arrested in February, also faces treason charges. Pavlov said that Voronin is suspected of passing the information on to Germany's BND foreign intelligence service and the University of Zurich in Switzerland. Pavlov noted that Voronin may have provided information "beneficial to the investigation" after his arrest.

"According to the FSB, the transferred information could be used to analyze the actions of Russian troops in Syria," Pavlov said, referring to Russia's Federal Security Service.

"According to the prosecution, Voronin paid Safronov a reward of $248 for this information," Pavlov wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

Safronov, who faces up to 20 years in prison if found guilty of treason, is now charged with two counts of treason.

Safronov denies all charges, state media cited his lawyer as saying later Tuesday.

His current lawyer Dmitry Talantov told state media Monday that investigators wrapped up the case against Safronov without indicating whether they pressed new charges against the journalist.

Safronov, who spent the past decade as a defense reporter for the Kommersant and Vedomosti business dailies, had been two months into his new job as an adviser to Russia's space agency chief when he was detained in a special operation on July 7, 2020.

Safronov said in an op-ed this July that the treason investigation is unfounded and that he will not make a plea bargain with Russian authorities.

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