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Russian Jailed in Norway for Illegal Drone Flight

By AFP

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Taryn Elliott / pexels

A Russian man was sentenced to 90 days in jail in Norway on Wednesday for flying a drone over the country in violation of a ban adopted in response to the war in Ukraine.

Now Europe's main supplier of natural gas, Norway has been on high alert since mysterious unmanned aircraft were spotted near strategic sites, including oil and gas platforms far offshore over the past few weeks.

The 34-year-old Russian citizen, who said he left Russia to escape President Vladimir Putin's partial mobilization order, was found guilty of flying a drone over southern Norway "on several occasions" between Oct. 13 and 20, a district court in Bergen said in its verdict.

While he only photographed and filmed the landscape, this violated a flight ban that Norway, like several other Western countries, imposed on Russians following the invasion of Ukraine.

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The man, who runs a small travel agency, defended himself by arguing that he was not aware of the ban.

The prosecution had asked for 120 days in prison, and his lawyer had asked for an acquittal.

Nearly a dozen Russians have been arrested in Norway in recent weeks for violating the flight ban or the ban on photographing sites deemed sensitive, as the country has heightened security around strategic infrastructure.

Wednesday's verdict is the first known prison sentence for violating the ban in Norway.

Last month, the Russian embassy in Oslo criticized what it called Norway's "psychosis" about espionage.

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