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Poland Finds 14 Foreigners Guilty of Spying for Russia

By AFP

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Polish law enforcement agents. **gov.pl**

A Polish court on Tuesday convicted 14 citizens of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine for planning to carry out acts of sabotage on behalf of Moscow.

The defendants were charged with espionage last month, accused of planning to derail trains shipping aid to Ukraine, as well as monitoring military facilities and critical infrastructure.

"After examining the case... the court found all the defendants guilty of the crimes charged, and found some of them to be operating within an organized criminal group," Judge Jaroslaw Kowalski said while delivering the verdict Tuesday.

The 14 defendants, who received jail terms ranging from 13 months to six years, were convicted in absentia after they all pleaded guilty and skipped the trial.

The members of the spy ring were "Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian," a court

spokesperson told AFP.

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Two other alleged members of the spy ring will be tried in court separately after they withdrew their initial guilty pleas.

Among those convicted was Maxim S., a Russian ice hockey player for a Polish club whose arrest in June prompted condemnation from Moscow, which demanded a "comprehensive explanation" from Poland.

The spy ring also included "two Ukrainian lawyers and a political scientist, a French language teacher, a pharmacy technician, [and] a software engineer," the Rzeczpospolita daily reported.

Investigators said the members of the spy ring received orders via the Telegram messaging app and were paid in cryptocurrency.

Polish media reported the sums they received ranged from $300 to around $10,000.

Among the facilities the convicted spies surveilled were Polish border checkpoints with Ukraine, as well as major rail networks used to transfer weapons and humanitarian aid to Kyiv.

Their tasks also included distributing propaganda handouts inciting hatred towards the Ukrainian people.

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