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OSCE Official Gets Jail Term for ‘Spying’ in Russian-Held Ukraine

By AFP

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Russian Prosecutor General's Office

A court in Ukraine's Russian-controlled Donetsk region on Friday jailed a member of the OSCE monitoring mission to Ukraine for "espionage" in a judgment condemned by the European security organization.

The Supreme Court of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic found Vadym Golda, 56, guilty and sentenced him to 14 years in a strict-regime penal colony, Russia's Prosecutor General's Office said in a statement.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) condemned it as "a grave violation of participating states' commitments under international law" and called for the immediate release of Golda and two other jailed OSCE officials.

Three Ukrainian nationals who were members of the OSCE special monitoring mission to

Ukraine — Golda, Maxim Petrov and Dmytro Shabanov — have been in detention in Russian-controlled Ukraine since 2022.

The OSCE ran a special monitoring mission in Ukraine from 2014 until shortly after Russia's 2022 military intervention when Moscow blocked its extension.

The unarmed civilian mission was tasked with observing and reporting on the security situation and facilitating dialogue between parties in the conflict.

The OSCE has issued several reports on possible crimes linked to the conflict and alleged crimes against humanity that the Russian Armed Forces are accused of committing in Ukraine.

Shabanov and Petrov were sentenced in September 2022 to 13 years in prison for alleged treason after closed-door trials in the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic.

The OSCE has repeatedly called for the men's release from "illegal detention," stressing they "still enjoy their functional legal protection as OSCE staff" and their detention "is incompatible with OSCE commitments arising in respect to Russia," which is a member.

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid said Friday: "I will not relent in my efforts and do everything possible to bring Vadym, Maxim and Dmytro back home to their families and loved ones."

Russian prosecutors said Golda, a security assistant to the mission, "carried out reconnaissance activities in the interests of foreign intelligence."

The statement on social media claimed he "gathered data on industrial facilities that were subsequently hit with missile strikes, causing damage amounting to almost 100 million rubles ($1.1 million)."

The Donetsk court also "confiscated" 43 armored vehicles used by the mission, prosecutors said.

On Friday, Russia's FSB security service also arrested a suspected Ukrainian military agent in Moscow-annexed Crimea who allegedly informed Kyiv on troop movements, Russian news agencies reported.

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