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Russia's Supreme Court Upholds Prison Sentence for Ex-Rebel Commander Girkin

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Igor Strelkov (Girkin). **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Supreme Court upheld the four-year prison sentence for nationalist and former rebel commander Igor Girkin, his wife and Russian media reported Wednesday.

Girkin, a convicted war criminal in the West and better known by his alias Igor Strelkov, was convicted of "inciting extremism" in January. The 53-year-old was arrested last summer after he criticized President Vladimir Putin's handling of the Ukraine war.

"The Jan. 25, 2024, Moscow City Court verdict and the May 29, 2024, appellate court ruling were left unchanged; the defense's cassation appeal was not upheld," Russia's Supreme Court said, according to the Interfax news agency.

The Supreme Court, like the two lower courts before it, deliberated behind closed doors.

Following reports that he might seek a pardon and possible deployment in Ukraine, Strelkov

said in September he had no plans to admit guilt or request a pardon from Putin.

Girkin commanded a pro-Russian separatist militia in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and played a central role in Russia's annexation of Crimea.

In November 2022, a Dutch court sentenced him in absentia to life in prison for the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine, which killed all 298 passengers and crew.

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