

Wife of Putin Ally Tears Up at U.K. Sanctions Trial

By [AFP](#)

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Dmitry Ovsianikov. **EPA / TASS**

The wife of a former Russian official and ally of President Vladimir Putin charged in the U.K. with dodging sanctions tearfully took to the stand in London on Wednesday, with her husband looking on.

Ekaterina Ovsianikova, 47, looked visibly upset as she told the court how she thought her relationship with Dmitrii Ovsianikov, 48, would founder as a result of the travel ban imposed for his role in Russian-occupied Crimea.

Along with Ovsianikov's brother Alexei Owsjanikow, 47, the couple have been standing trial at Southwark Crown Court since March 18 as the first people to be charged under the U.K.'s Russia Regulations law.

If convicted they face fines and a maximum of seven years' imprisonment, with Ovsianikova

saying ahead of her taking the stand that the ongoing proceedings had had an effect on her children.

Ovsiannikov, who is out on bail, was appointed by Putin as governor of Sevastopol two years after the peninsula's annexation by Russia from Ukraine in 2014.

As a result, the European Union imposed financial sanctions on him in 2017, which the U.K. maintained after leaving the EU.

While the EU lifted its sanctions in February 2023, the U.K. ones still apply.

Ovsiannikov, who also served as Russia's deputy industry and trade minister, is facing seven counts of circumventing sanctions between February 2023 and January 2024.

He is accused of opening a British bank account, which then received 76,000 pounds (\$98,000) from his wife to be used to buy a car.

The bank realized he was on the U.K. sanctions list and froze the account. His brother Owsjanikow bought the car instead.

'Impact on my children'

Alexei also paid more than 40,000 pounds (\$51,500) in school fees for his brother's two youngest children to attend a school in London, which prosecutors say was also a breach of the sanctions.

Ovsiannikov traveled from Russia to Turkey in August 2022 and applied online for a British passport, which was granted despite the sanctions as his father was born in the U.K.

He arrived in the U.K. to join his wife and two younger children in February 2023.

The defense began presenting their case on Wednesday, with Ovsiannikova speaking to the court through an interpreter.

Describing the time when she was living in London while he remained in Turkey due to the travel ban, she said: "I thought it was the end of our relationship."

In a statement read out on Tuesday, she said that she did not know her husband was subject to a U.K. asset freeze and believed he did not either.

"I'm really upset about this situation and the impact on my children," she added.

The trial is expected to last around three weeks in total.

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