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Russian Court May Release Jailed Army General Popov to Fight in Ukraine – TASS

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Major General Ivan Popov. **Alexei Potitsky / TASS**

A Russian military court will rule Wednesday on whether or not to grant the Defense Ministry's request to release a general arrested on fraud allegations and send him to the frontline in Ukraine, state-run media reported, citing the general's lawyer.

Major General Ivan Popov, who commanded Russia's 58th Combined Arms Army in Ukraine, was arrested in May 2024 on accusations of misappropriating $1.5 million worth of metal intended for reinforcing defensive structures in occupied Ukraine. Popov was initially granted house arrest, but was returned to pre-trial detention over unspecified violations.

"Together with the Defense Ministry, we have filed a motion to suspend proceedings and change the form of restraint due to the decision to send Ivan Ivanovich [Popov] to the special military operation [in Ukraine]," lawyer Sergei Buinovsky told the state-run news agency TASS.

The Tambov Garrison Military Court, south of Moscow, took a 30-minute break ahead of the prosecution's sentencing request, TASS reported.

President Vladimir Putin signed laws in October allowing courts to suspend or terminate criminal cases and send defendants who sign military contracts to fight in Ukraine. A soldier's criminal record can be expunged if they are presented with state awards for their conduct on the battlefield.

Last month, Russian media reported that Popov had asked Putin to allow him to "continue smashing the enemy" in Ukraine in a letter that the Kremlin said it received.

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Buinovsky said his client thanked Putin for his "support and trust" in court.

Unverified reporting by the Telegram news channel Mash, which claims to have sources in Russia's security services, said Popov could command an assault unit if he is released.

Popov stirred controversy a year before his arrest, accusing former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu of personally relieving him of his commanding role after he complained openly about systemic mismanagement within the military. Shoigu has since been replaced by Putin's trusted adviser and economist Andrei Belousov.

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