

U.K. Jails Russian Ex-Minister in First Sanctions Breach Case

By [AFP](#)

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Dmitrii Ovsiannikov. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

A former Russian minister and ally of President Vladimir Putin was sentenced Friday to 40 months in prison by a British court for breaching U.K. sanctions — the first conviction of its kind.

Dmitrii Ovsiannikov, 48, was found guilty earlier this week of six counts of sanctions evasion related to his role in Russian-occupied Crimea. The breaches occurred between February 2023 and January 2024.

Ovsiannikov served as deputy industry minister in Moscow and was appointed mayor of Sevastopol, Crimea's largest city, in 2016, two years after Russia illegally annexed the peninsula from Ukraine.

He was sanctioned by the EU in 2017 — restrictions later mirrored by the U.K. after Brexit.

While the EU lifted its sanctions in February 2023, U.K. sanctions remain in force, barring him from entering the country or accessing funds there.

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Despite the ban, Ovsianikov traveled from Russia to Turkey in 2022 and successfully applied for a British passport — citing his father's U.K. birth — before entering the country in February 2023 to join his wife and two children.

He was found to have violated sanctions by opening a U.K. bank account, receiving nearly 80,000 pounds (\$100,000) from his wife and accepting a car from his brother. The account was later frozen when the bank flagged his name on the U.K. sanctions list.

At London's Southwark Crown Court, Judge Sara Cockerill said Ovsianikov will serve up to half his sentence in custody before being released on license.

His brother, Alexei Owsjanikow, 47, was convicted of two counts of enabling a breach of sanctions after paying more than 40,000 pounds in school fees for Ovsianikov's children. He was acquitted on three other charges, including arranging car insurance and purchasing a Mercedes-Benz.

Ovsianikov's wife, Ekaterina Ovsianikova, 47, was cleared of all charges.

The maximum penalty for breaching U.K. sanctions on Russia is seven years in prison.

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