

Kursk Governor Has Office Blessed After Predecessor's Arrest on Fraud Charges

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Acting Kursk region Governor Alexander Khinshtein and an Russian Orthodox priest. vk.com/a_hinshtein

Acting Kursk region Governor Alexander Khinshtein invited a Russian Orthodox priest to bless his office with holy water following the arrest of his predecessor on fraud charges earlier this week.

“I have a clear understanding of how much sinfulness has accumulated within these walls in light of recent events,” Khinshtein [wrote](#) in a message posted on Telegram Thursday.

Khinshtein, who was born to a Jewish family, also shared a video showing the Russian Orthodox priest splashing holy water in his office using a ritual brush.

In December, President Vladimir Putin appointed Khinshtein, a former federal lawmaker and senior member of the ruling United Russia party, as acting governor of the southwestern Kursk region.

Khinshtein replaced ex-governor Alexei Smirnov, who was [placed](#) in pre-trial detention on

Thursday over allegations that he and his deputy embezzled 1 billion rubles (\$12.17 million) from a state contract to build defensive fortifications near the Ukrainian border.

Related article: [Police Arrest Former Kursk Region Governor Alexei Smirnov](#)

Smirnov had served as acting governor for less than three months when Ukrainian forces launched a surprise incursion into the Kursk region in August, forcing thousands of residents to flee their homes. Despite much of the region being under Ukrainian control at the time, Smirnov was elected governor in September with nearly two-thirds of the vote.

Ukraine's incursion, which appeared to meet little resistance, drew public anger and intensified scrutiny over the state of the region's defenses and the use of government funds. Smirnov's abrupt resignation in December and Khinshtein's subsequent appointment were widely seen as a Kremlin effort to defuse protests and restore order.

In recent weeks, Russian troops have taken back much of the Kursk region, though a small portion reportedly remains under Ukrainian control.

On Friday, Khinshtein [said](#) prosecutors had launched more than 10 criminal cases tied to border defense projects in the region since late 2024.

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