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Russian Man Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison Over $25 Donation to Ukrainian Army

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A court in Russia's Sverdlovsk region has sentenced a man to 12 years in a high-security penal colony for donating about $25 to the Ukrainian military, the independent Mediazona news website reported Monday.

Prosecutors alleged that Yevgeny Varaksin, 27, a resident of the closed city of Lesnoy, transferred 100 Polish zlotys "to finance the Armed Forces of Ukraine" while visiting Poland in April 2022.

He was convicted of high treason following a trial held behind closed doors, Mediazona reported.

In addition to the prison sentence, the Sverdlovsk Regional Court ordered Varaksin to pay a fine of 300,000 rubles ($3,650) and serve 1.5 years of probation.

Varaksin had partially admitted his guilt, according to the state prosecutor.

The judge in Varaksin's case, Judge Andrei Mineyev, previously sentenced Wall Street Journal journalist and former Moscow Times reporter Evan Gershkovich to 16 years in prison on espionage charges. Gershkovich was freed in August 2024 as part of a major prisoner exchange between Moscow and the West.

According to Mineyev, Varaksin was unemployed. However, Mediazona reported that he was listed as an employee of Kombinat Elektrokhimpribor, a part of the state nuclear corporation Rosatom's nuclear weapons complex, in 2022.

The number of treason cases and convictions in Russia has significantly risen since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

According to the independent investigative outlet IStories, 145 Russian citizens were convicted of treason last year. That figure is nearly four times higher than the number of convictions in 2023 and the highest recorded in modern Russian history, the outlet said.

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