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Moscow-Backed Governor in Occupied Zaporizhzhia Awards Jailed Russian General Popov

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Ivan Popov. **Alexei Potitsky / TASS**

The Kremlin-installed head of Ukraine's partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region on Thursday awarded imprisoned Russian general Ivan Popov for his military service.

Popov, a former commander of Russia's 58th Army, was sentenced in April to five years in prison on fraud charges after being accused of misappropriating $1.5 million worth of metal intended for fortifying Russian defensive positions in occupied Ukrainian territory.

His arrest drew criticism from prominent pro-war military bloggers, who accused the Defense Ministry of sidelining a respected battlefield commander. Popov, who denied the charges against him, had asked President Vladimir Putin to allow him to return to service in Ukraine, but that request was denied.

The Moscow-backed governor of Zaporizhzhia, Yevgeny Balitsky, signed an order on

Wednesday awarding Popov the Order "For Merit to the Zaporizhzhia Region," citing his "demonstrated courage, professionalism and fulfillment of duty."

Balitsky also awarded three other senior Russian officers for their role in repelling Ukraine's counteroffensive in the summer of 2023, including Colonel General Alexander Romanchuk, Colonel General Denis Lyamin and Lieutenant General Sergei Nyrkov.

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