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Ex-Head of Russian Military Theme Park Jailed 5 Years Over Construction Fraud

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parkpatriot.ru

A Moscow region court has sentenced the former head of Russia's military theme park to five years in prison for fraud related to state construction contracts, authorities said Friday.

Vyacheslav Akhmedov, the former director of Patriot Park, and Vladimir Shesterov, a former senior Defense Ministry official, were arrested last year on fraud charges linked to the park's operations. Former Deputy Defense Minister Pavel Popov was arrested weeks later on similar charges.

Akhmedov and Shesterov pleaded guilty and were moved to house arrest after testifying against Popov. A military court sentenced Shesterov to six years in prison last month.

On Friday, the Odintsovsky City Court in the Moscow region found Akhmedov guilty of large-scale fraud and forgery.

In addition to a five-year term in medium-security prison, Akhmedov was fined 300,000

rubles ($3,700), banned from holding public office for two years and stripped of all state honors.

Prosecutors had asked to sentence Akhmedov to six years in prison and fine him half a million rubles ($6,200).

He and Shesterov were accused of causing "significant" damage to the Defense Ministry by falsifying construction work documents at Patriot Park between 2022 and 2024.

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The court also awarded Russia's Defense Ministry 16 million rubles ($200k) and Patriot Park 7 million rubles ($87k) as part of a civil suit, according to the state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

Investigators alleged that Popov had ordered Akhmedov and Shesterov to oversee the construction of a fully furnished two-story home and garage, a guest house and a bath house similar to those at Patriot Park in his private Moscow region property, according to the news agency.

They reportedly told the contractors that the nearly 26 million rubles ($320k) worth of construction was part of Patriot Park and entered false information into official documents.

Criminal proceedings continue against Popov, a high-profile figure under investigation on multiple charges, including bribery, abuse of power, fraud and illegal weapons possession.

Akhmedov, Shesterov and Popov are among several senior military officials arrested on fraud charges last year in an apparent purge of the Russian Defense Ministry.

Akhmedov had served as director of Patriot Park from October 2021 until his arrest in August 2024.

Patriot Park, located in the town of Kubinka, 60 kilometers (37 miles) west of Moscow, is a military theme park and exhibition center featuring interactive exhibits and displays of weapons and equipment. In addition to live-firing ranges, the park hosts a grandiose Orthodox cathedral dedicated to the country's armed forces.

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