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Ex-Kursk Lawmaker Jailed 5.5 Years for Border Defense Embezzlement

December 26, 2025



Maxim Vasilyev. **@moscowcourts**

A judge in the southwestern Kursk region on Friday sentenced former regional lawmaker Maxim Vasilyev to 5.5 years in prison on embezzlement charges stemming from border defense construction failures that led to Ukraine's surprise cross-border incursion.

Vasilyev is among at least 11 officials and business executives implicated in related cases after Ukrainian forces captured large swaths of Kursk region territory in August 2024, which triggered an investigation into border defenses.

Vasilyev was accused of embezzling millions of rubles earmarked for defense projects and paying millions more to the Kursk region's former deputy governor, whom prosecutors accuse of running an "organized group" alongside former Governor Alexei Smirnov.

A judge from the Leninsky District Court found Vasilyev guilty of large-scale embezzlement, according to a statement from the press service of the Kursk region's court system.

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In addition to the prison sentence, Vasilyev was fined 800,000 rubles ($10,100) and ordered to repay 152.8 million rubles ($1.9 million) to a regional construction company as part of a separate civil claim.

Vasilyev had pleaded guilty and entered a plea deal.

The court press service said the verdict against Vasilyev has not yet entered into legal force and can be appealed.

Vasilyev, who resigned in 2023 after public criticism for taking vacations abroad during the war, has repeatedly asked to be sent to Ukraine as a volunteer fighter.

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