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Former Kursk Governor Alexei Smirnov Jailed 14 Years for Defrauding Government

April 06, 2026



Alexei Smirnov in court. **@sudrfkursk / Telegram**

A judge in the southwestern Kursk region on Monday sentenced former Governor Alexei Smirnov to 14 years in prison after he was found guilty of defrauding the government, making him the highest-ranking ex-official to have been jailed in a years-long corruption saga involving border defense construction projects.

Smirnov, who served as governor between May and December 2024, was arrested on fraud charges last year along with his first deputy, Alexei Dedov. The two men were accused of embezzling public funds meant for defense fortifications along the border with Ukraine.

In court last month, Smirnov testified against his late predecessor, Roman Starovoit, and entered into a plea bargain with state prosecutors, allowing his case to be heard without an examination of evidence and witness testimonies.

The press service of the Kursk region's court system, in announcing the guilty verdict on Monday, said Smirnov would spend his 14-year sentence at a maximum-security prison, as well as be required to pay a fine of 400 million rubles ($5 million)

A judge also ruled for the confiscation of 20.95 million rubles ($261,500), the same amount Smirnov said he had accepted as bribes from two construction companies contracted by the state to build border fortifications.

In addition, the former governor was stripped of his state awards and banned from holding public office for 10 years after his release from prison.

State prosecutors had requested a 15-year prison sentence.

Related article: Kursk Construction Boss Jailed 9 Years in Border Defense Embezzlement Case

Smirnov had said in court last month that Starovoit, who became Russia's transportation minister in May 2024, may have received 100 million rubles ($1.2 million) in a kickback scheme where bribes from contractors selected to build border fortifications and rebuild occupied areas were split among regional officials.

Starovoit shot himself last July amid reports that he was also under investigation in the corruption case.

In February, a Kursk judge sentenced the former chief executive of a local construction company and three managers to between seven and nine years in prison after finding them guilty of defrauding the government through defense fortification contracts.

Smirnov's arrest last year came after the Ukrainian military launched a surprise offensive into the Kursk region in August 2024 and seized large swaths of territory. Ukraine was forced to retreat from the region early last year following a Russian counteroffensive.

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