

## London Man Accused of Funding Russian Separatists with Cryptocurrency

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— Categories: Defense & Security



A dual British-Russian national appeared in a London court this week, accused of breaching UK sanctions by transferring cryptocurrency to support Russian-backed separatist groups in eastern Ukraine. Mikhail Vlasov, 53, was charged with eight offenses under the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, marking only the second known case in the UK of criminal proceedings directly linked to the conflict in Ukraine.

Vlasov is alleged to have sent over £4,000 in cryptocurrency to entities operating in the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics between April 2022 and April 2023. These regions, under the control of pro-Russian militias, have been at the center of intense fighting since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in 2022. According to prosecutors, the transactions were not isolated donations but part of a broader pattern of support involving the provision of military equipment, weapons, and protective gear for separatist fighters.

The charges reflect a growing emphasis by UK authorities on enforcing sanctions regimes and pursuing individuals accused of violating them. During a brief appearance at Westminster Magistrates' Court, Vlasov confirmed his name and date of birth. The case was deemed too serious for a lower court to handle and has now been referred to Southwark Crown Court, with a hearing scheduled for July 29.

The prosecution underscores the UK's commitment to maintaining pressure on Russia and its affiliates through both diplomatic and legal channels. While most UK sanctions violations result in financial penalties or asset freezes, the decision to pursue criminal charges in this case sends a clear signal that breaches connected to acts of war will be treated with the utmost seriousness. Prosecutors will seek to demonstrate that the funds transferred via cryptocurrency platforms directly contributed to the war effort in Ukraine's occupied territories.

Vlasov, who currently resides in London, has not yet entered a plea. If convicted, he could face a substantial prison sentence. The case comes amid broader efforts by Western governments to clamp down on the use of digital currencies in circumventing international sanctions. Law enforcement agencies across Europe and North America have

increasingly focused on tracing blockchain transactions linked to sanctioned entities.

This case represents a significant test for the UK's legal framework surrounding crypto assets and wartime accountability. As the proceedings unfold, they are likely to shed further light on how individuals and networks may be using emerging technologies to covertly support foreign conflicts, and how governments are responding.