

Britain Sentences Embassy Guard to 13 Years for Spying for Moscow

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British Embassy in Berlin. **Jean-Pierre Dalbéra (CC BY 2.0)**

A former security guard at the British Embassy in Berlin was sentenced to over 13 years in prison Friday on charges of spying for Russia.

David Ballantyne Smith, 58, admitted to passing sensitive material to the Russian Embassy in Berlin before being caught in a sting operation.

Sentencing him to 13 years and two months in jail at a court in central London, the judge told Smith "You were paid by Russia for your treachery," adding that his motive had been to "damage British interests."

The judge on Thursday rejected Smith's claims that he had passed information to Moscow only twice in order to cause "embarrassment" to the U.K.

Smith "was motivated by his antipathy towards this country and intended to damage this country's interests by acting as he did," the judge said.

Prosecutors said Smith first wrote to the Russian Embassy in 2020, revealing details of British Embassy staff and suggesting further contact.

British and German authorities then formed a plot to try to catch Smith in the act.

Smith, who was arrested in August 2021 and later extradited to the U.K., told the court this week he felt "ashamed" when he saw the British Embassy staff he had betrayed, claiming that he had only wanted to cause "inconvenience and embarrassment."

AFP contributed reporting.

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