

Suspects arrested in Boris Nemtsov murder

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Five suspects in the murder of Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov have been detained by the authorities in Moscow, with two already having been charged with the crime.

A judge ordered that Khamzat Bakhaev, Tamerlan Eskerkhanov, Shagit Gubashev, Anzor Gubashev, and Zaur Dadayev be held in custody on the grounds that they could hide from investigators, threaten witnesses, or destroy evidence if released.

A sixth suspect, Beslan Shavanov, allegedly blew himself up with a grenade on Sunday when security services surrounded his apartment in Grozny in an effort to arrest him. According to local government sources, Shavanov had not been on any list of suspected criminals in the region. A press account reported that he threw one explosive device at the police and then took his own life.

Three of the arrested—Shagit Gubashev, Bakhaev, and Eskerkhanov—have already denied their participation in the crime. Eskerkhanov claims to have an alibi, stating that he was at work at the time of Nemtsov's murder. Dadayev, who served in the Russian Ministry of the Internal Affairs' "Sever" Battalion in Chechnya, has reportedly already confessed to being involved.

Dadayev's mother, however, told Russia's Interfax news agency that she does not believe that her son or her nephews—the Gubashev brothers—could have committed the crime. She stated that Dadayev had been fighting alongside forces allied to Kremlin-backed Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov against Islamic fundamentalists and underground criminals for 10 years.

With the exception of Dadayev's ties to the state security services and the fact that Anzor Gubashev worked as a guard at a supermarket on the outskirts of Moscow, little has been reported about the background of the suspects. No motive has been given for their alleged participation. Former Federal Security Services

(FSB) head Aleksandr Bortnikov told *RIA Novosti* that the investigation would now have to concentrate on determining who ordered the assassination, since those arrested "are most likely just the executors [of the crime]."

All six suspects were from the North Caucasus region of Russia, indicating that the Russian government may be pursuing the avenue that Nemtsov's killing has something to do with the ongoing conflict in this region. The North Caucasus has been the site of bloody confrontations between Russian government forces and US-backed Islamic separatists for years.

Immediately after Nemtsov's death in the center of Moscow two weekends ago, Russian officials declared the murder a "provocation" and put forward the possibility that the murder was bound up with Nemtsov's support for Charlie Hebdo, the French satirical magazine whose writers were the victims of a terrorist assault in Paris in January over their publication of anti-Islamic cartoons.

Massive demonstrations took place after the Paris terrorist attacks in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, against the promotion of anti-Muslim sentiment in the West. In a republic with a total population of just 1.26 million people, 800,000 people took part.

As Washington has promoted Islamist separatism against Moscow in the North Caucasus since the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR in 1991, indications of possible Chechen involvement in a killing motivated by Islamist sentiment cast doubt on initial, hysterical accusations in the Western media that the Kremlin was responsible for the killing of Nemtsov. However, at this stage the identity and motives of the assassins remain unclear.

In the days after Nemtsov's death, the WSWWS explained that the assassination could only be understood in the context of the confrontation between the US and Russia that has emerged most sharply in the

NATO-led putsch and the resulting proxy war in Ukraine. Regardless of whether the crime has its origins in Moscow or Washington, it is being used by US imperialism to whip up anti-Putin sentiment, turning Nemstov into a martyr around which all forces of Russia's free-market opposition can rally.

The ultimate goal of the imperialist campaign is to lay the groundwork for regime change and the ethnic partition of Russia—a point to which Russia's ruling oligarchs refer only with euphemisms, as they seek to work out a corrupt deal with the imperialist powers in Europe and America.

In a December speech, Putin declared that some of Russia's "close friends and even allies" were sponsoring terrorism on its soil and "would gladly let Russia follow the Yugoslav scenario of disintegration and dismemberment." The Kremlin initially labeled Nemtsov's assassination a "provocation," and early on investigators indicated that they were pursuing the possibility that it was aimed at "destabilizing" the Russian state.

In another development related to Nemtsov's killing, Anna Duritskaya, a Ukrainian model who was with Nemtsov when he was murdered, has sought protection from the Ukrainian police reportedly due to threats being made against her.

She returned to Ukraine shortly after Nemtsov's death. She was unharmed in the attack and told the Russian police that she suffered shock at the moment of the event and could not remember the details of what happened. The Ukrainian government has stated that Duritskaya will not be allowed to leave Ukraine and return to Russia, regardless of requests made by the Russian government.



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