

# Explosion in St. Petersburg café kills pro-Kremlin military blogger, wounds 32

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Prominent Russian military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky was killed at age 41 in an explosion in a café in St. Petersburg on Sunday afternoon. The explosion, which took place during an event with Tatarsky hosted by the pro-Kremlin group “Cyber Front Z,” also wounded another 32 people, several of whom are in critical condition.

Russia’s Investigative Committee, the country’s main federal investigative authority, is treating the incident as a terrorist attack. A 25-year-old woman, Daria Trepova, was arrested and charged with murder hours after the blast. On Monday, Russian investigators released a video to the media in which Trepova confessed to the attack. They also claim that she was part of the Anti-Corruption Fund that was founded and run by the now imprisoned right-wing anti-Putin oppositionist Alexei Navalny, and had earlier participated in antiwar rallies organized by the pro-NATO liberal opposition.

Trepova’s husband, Dmitry Rylov, who lives abroad, is reported to have been a member of the banned oppositionist Libertarian Party, which has supported Navalny in the past. The party has denied any connection to or knowledge of the attack and insists that Trepova’s husband was not involved in it either. According to the Investigative Committee, the planning and organization of the attack occurred in Ukraine.

The spokeswoman of Russia’s foreign ministry, Maria Zakharova, directly blamed the Zelensky government for the attack, stating that Tatarsky’s activities “have won him the hatred of the Kyiv regime” and that he and other Russian military bloggers had faced Ukrainian threats.

The Kremlin will no doubt use the explosion to intensify the crackdown not only on its pro-NATO opponents in the ruling class and the upper-middle

class, such as Navalny, but also on democratic rights more broadly.

Vladlen Tatarsky had a following of over half a million people on the popular Russian social media app Telegram, and was one of the best known proponents of and commentators on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Born in East Ukraine, Tatarsky was originally a miner-turned-small business owner. He was imprisoned for bank robbery before joining Russian-backed separatists in East Ukraine to fight in a civil war against the Ukrainian army and fascist paramilitaries after the NATO-backed far-right coup in Kiev in 2014. Like many ultranationalist bloggers, Tatarsky frequently criticized Russia’s military leadership for mistakes in the conduct of the war, as Russia suffered major setbacks, especially in the spring and fall of 2022.

The coverage of the explosion in the Western press has been markedly muted, with only perfunctory reports appearing in leading outlets. Many uncritically quoted Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who visibly rejoiced about the killing on Twitter while denying Ukraine’s involvement. He wrote, “Spiders are eating each other in a jar. Question of when domestic terrorism would become an instrument of internal political fight was a matter of time.”

In Russia, many commentators have drawn parallels to the assassination of Daria Dugina last August with a car bomb that presumably also targeted her father, the well-known ultranationalist philosopher Alexander Dugin. Dugina and Tatarsky knew each other and Tatarsky at the time described her death as the killing of a “saint.”

While Western outlets also noted the parallel to Dugina’s killing, they failed to offer any broader context or background to either her killing or the

explosion in St. Petersburg.

After Dugina's killing in August, the *New York Times* was quick to claim that "there was no evidence that the attack was connected to the war in Ukraine." Yet only two months later, in October, the *Times* reported, "U.S. believes Ukrainians were behind an assassination in Russia." As the WSWS noted, the claim by the *New York Times* that the US "took no part in the attack, either by providing intelligence or other assistance" lacked any credibility.

The WSWS wrote: "The Kiev regime is a creation of the US-instigated 2014 Maidan coup, and the dependence of its military on US armaments and intelligence services is an established fact. It is nothing less than preposterous to suggest that Ukraine could have carried out a high-level killing in Moscow without US knowledge and approval."

Earlier reports by the *Times* and other outlets have also pointed to the existence of a substantial network of Ukrainian insurgents operating in territories claimed by Russia in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, where they carry out car bombings and targeted assassinations, including of workers accused of having "collaborated" with the Russians.

This insurgency is ongoing and an integral part of the NATO war waged against Russia through proxies in the Ukrainian military. On Sunday, Russian officials reported Ukrainian strikes with US-delivered HIMARS on the city of Melitopol in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast in southeastern Ukraine, one of the territories now occupied by Russia. At least six people were wounded and several buildings, as well as a railway, were damaged. According to RIA Novosti, there have been multiple terror attacks in the city over the past weeks.

While this goes virtually unreported in the Western media, there are also frequent Ukrainian air strikes on civilian, military and industrial facilities in Russia's Kursk and Belgorod regions that directly border Eastern Ukraine, as well as Crimea, the peninsula in the Black Sea that has been claimed by Russia since March 2014. On Sunday, another seven people were reportedly wounded when a Ukrainian missile hit a Russian cemetery in the Kursk region near the border with Ukraine.

Sunday's explosion also took place amidst a staggering crisis of the Ukrainian military and preparations by NATO for a "counteroffensive" by

Ukraine this spring.

Last week, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky ruled out any compromise with Russia and insisted that the town of Bakhmut must not fall to Russia, because otherwise the Ukrainian population "will push me to have compromise with them."

The Ukrainian military is estimated to have suffered at least 100,000 dead and hundreds of thousands of wounded out of less than 30 million people who still live in territory controlled by the Zelensky government. Even the warmongering *New York Times* acknowledged in a recent report that "morale, an area in which Ukrainian fighters held an edge for much of the war, is becoming more of a challenge. In a dozen or so recent interviews, soldiers at positions near Bakhmut or emerging from the crucible of street fighting for short breaks expressed dismay at the scale of violence and death."

The report heavily relied on statements by Ilya Samoilenko, commander of the neo-Nazi Azov forces, who recently toured the US, where he spoke at Columbia University in New York, and now plays a prominent role in training new Ukrainian soldiers for the war.

The response by NATO to the crisis of the Zelensky regime and the Ukrainian army has been to escalate its offensive against Russia. According to Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the EU is close to discussing sending "peacekeeping" troops to Ukraine. NATO will soon double the length of its border with Russia by admitting Finland to the military alliance. Over the past three months, NATO has delivered hundreds of tanks as well as advanced weapons systems to Ukraine. Thousands of Ukrainian soldiers are currently trained directly by NATO for the war against Russia.



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