The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Investigators See Progress On Politkovskaya Murder

By Alexandra Taranova

October 06, 2010



Activists remembering Anna Politkovskaya at a rally in Paris on Wednesday. **Jacky Naegelen**

Investigators have tracked down the underground workshop that made the gun used to kill journalist Anna Politkovskaya, pushing forward their inquiry into her 2006 death, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Wednesday.

But Politkovskaya's editor expressed skepticism over the report, which appeared ahead of the four-year anniversary of her death Thursday.

The workshop, located in a tramcar plant in an unspecified Moscow suburb and run by a local locksmith, rebuilt air guns into actual firearms, a law enforcement official told the newspaper.

Police investigators have confirmed that the gun used in Politkovskaya's murder was made in the workshop and have also linked the workshop to a gun silencer used in the 2004 killing of reputed mafia boss Mikhail "Monya" Pishchik, the unidentified official said. He said both hits

might have been carried out by the same person.

One of four suspects in the Politkovskaya case, former police officer Sergei Khadzhikurbanov, was connected to the workshop, the report said.

Khadzhikurbanov, who is currently serving an eight-year sentence for extortion, was recently brought to Moscow's Matrosskaya Tishina jail from his prison in Mordovia for questioning. Investigators think that he might know who ordered the firearms used in the killings of Politkovskaya and Pishchik.

But Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-chief of the Novaya Gazeta newspaper where Politkovskaya worked, criticized the investigation, saying it “has lost its tempo,” Interfax reported.

Muratov cited the search for a fifth suspect, Rustam Makhmudov, as an example of a botched police job. Makhmudov managed to obtain a foreign passport and leave the country in 2008 despite being on a national wanted list. He was not placed on a European wanted list until recently.

Muratov said the search for the mastermind of Politkovskaya's murder has probably been stalled over the political implications of the case. He did not elaborate.

Politkovskaya was a Kremlin critic who wrote critical investigative reports about human rights abuses in Chechnya under President Ramzan Kadyrov.

Also Wednesday, activists from Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International gathered near the Eiffel Tower in Paris to commemorate Politkovskaya. They held a giant French-language poster reading, "Russia, Freedom Murdered."

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