

Village Slaughter in Federal Spotlight

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As the country reeled from the shock of a village massacre that killed 12 people, including four children, federal authorities sought to find out how the bloodbath could have happened in the first place.

The State Duma's Security Committee held a closed meeting about the Nov. 5 killings of a farmer's family in their own home in the Krasnodar region village of Kushchyovskaya. Also slain were two neighbors and a visiting Rostov-on-Don businessman, his wife, two daughters and in-laws.

Most of the victims were stabbed with knives, but several children were strangled and one died of smoke inhalation when the attackers unsuccessfully tried to set fire to the house, news reports said.

The Duma meeting was attended by Investigative Committee chief Alexander Bastrykin, Interfax reported.

At least six suspects have been detained in connection with the killings, including a local gang leader, Sergei Tsapok, and a local lawmaker, Sergei Tsepovyaz, police said.

Krasnodar Governor Alexander Tkachyov told a regional security council meeting Wednesday that the whole country was watching the investigation into a massacre that has “shocked everyone,” the regional administration said on its [web site](#).

He said the killings could be considered solved.

Tkachyov also said he had fired several local police officials, including the Kushchyovsky district's police chief, Viktor Burnosov.

But Burnosov denied Thursday that he had been dismissed, saying he had stepped down voluntarily.

Burnosov, speaking at a news conference in the village, said there was no criminal gang in the village capable of the slaughter, RIA-Novosti reported.

He denied media reports that a gang had been extorting local residents for several years and carried out 220 rapes and dozens of killings.

Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev said during a visit to Vladikavkaz on Thursday that he has ordered a group of officers from the Interior Ministry in Moscow to review the work of the Kushchyovskaya police force.

Bastrykin plans to meet with the villagers Monday to discuss the criminalization of the area, the Investigative Committee said.

“The Investigative Committee intends to take thorough and decisive measures to re-establish law and order in the area in order to avoid such a situation in the future,” the committee said in a [statement](#).

More arrests might be made in connection with unreported crimes committed in Kushchyovskaya, population 30,000, in recent years, it said.

In 2002, village Mayor Boris Moskvich was shot dead in the yard of the administration building after he tried to oppose local gangsters. No one has been charged in the killing.

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