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# Top Senator Links Georgia to Airport Bombing

By Natalya Krainova

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A senior senator has accused Georgia of involvement in the recent Domodedovo Airport suicide bombing that killed 37 people, provoking angry denials from Tbilisi.

Federation Council First Deputy Speaker Alexander Torshin said the airport bombing was organized by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's "ruling regime," not Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov, who has claimed responsibility for the Jan. 24 attack that killed 37 people and injured more than 120.

"Saakashvili's regime didn't need Umarov to organize bombings because there is [South] Ossetian traitor [Dmitry] Sanakoyev and his agents," Torshin, who is a member of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, told Rossiiskaya Gazeta in an interview published Tuesday.

Sanakoyev is a former prime minister for breakaway, pro-Moscow South Ossetia who

switched sides.

"Saakashvili doesn't hide his anger toward us," Torshin said. "He made anti-Russian sentiment an item for sale a long time ago and sells it."

Vladimir Kolesnikov, a former top law enforcement official who now serves as deputy chairman of the State Duma's Security Committee, supported Torshin's claim, saying it was "not unfounded," RIA-Novosti reported.

The allegation drew swift condemnation in Tbilisi, where a Georgian deputy foreign minister, Nino Kalanadze, told reporters that it was a "purposeful provocation" that would become an "issue for international discussion," Interfax reported.

Senior Russian and Georgian politicians have fired numerous verbal salvos at each other in recent years, and Saakashvili's spokeswoman Manana Mandzhgaladze dismissed Torshin's comments as "traditional absurd remarks" from Russia, Interfax said.

The leader of Russia's considerable Georgian diaspora, Mikhail Khubutia, warned that Torshin might unravel "the titanic work" by Russian authorities to improve relations with Georgia, tense since a 2008 war. He said in a statement that Torshin had acted "irresponsibly" and in a manner "unworthy of a serious politician."

A spokesman for the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, which coordinates anti-terrorism efforts between government agencies, played down the allegation. He said it reflected Torshin's personal opinion and noted that the Domodedovo investigation remains ongoing.

Umarov, who claimed responsibility for the bombing in the Moscow airport's international arrivals hall, has threatened to carry out a series of attacks across the country. Russian officials have accused Tbilisi of sympathizing with Chechen rebels in the past.

In a related development, the Federal Security Service has detained a suspected subordinate of Umarov as he sought to flee from Moscow to Moldova, the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said. The detainee, Khasu Batalov, 29, has been linked to another senior rebel, Aslan Byutukayev, 47, also known as Amir Khamzat, who is suspected of involvement in the preparation of the recent Domodedovo bombing, the committee said in a statement Monday.

Umarov appointed Batalov to lead rebels in Chechnya's Achkhoi-Martan district in December 2009, and he is suspected, among other things, of opening fire at a police checkpoint on Dec. 15, killing a police officer and injuring a civilian, the statement said.

Also, 16 suspected rebels were detained in Dagestan from Feb. 16 to 28, the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said Tuesday, Interfax reported. One of the suspects was identified as Magomed Abakarov, who purportedly sold a car that rebels blew up in the Dagestani town of Kizlyar on March 31, killing two policemen and a local woman.

Separately, Stavropol region police chief Alexander Gorovoi told reporters that investigators had identified rebels who shot dead three Moscow tourists at a ski resort in the Kabardino-Balkaria republic last month, Interfax reported.

Gorovoi did not elaborate, but a law enforcement source in Kabardino-Balkaria told Interfax

that the rebels were led by the republic's top rebel, Asker Dzhappuyev.

The attack was masterminded by 8 to 10 people, and three people carried it out, Interfax said.

City Hall announced Tuesday that it would pay 100,000 rubles ($3,480) each to two Muscovites injured in the tourist attack in Kabardino-Balkaria.

On Monday, City Hall paid compensation of 2 million rubles ($70,000) each to 20 families whose relatives died in the Domodedovo bombing. City Hall paid 1.5 million rubles to people seriously injured in the attack, and 1 million rubles to those with minor injuries.

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