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Cop Despised by Nationalists Shot in Head

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An Armenian-born Moscow police officer was shot and wounded in an attack possibly staged by ultranationalists who had him on their "firing squad lists," news reports said Thursday.

An unidentified assailant fired three shots at Gagik Benyaminyan, 42, late Wednesday when he arrived in his car at a police building on Shchyolkovskoye Shosse in eastern Moscow, a police spokeswoman told Interfax.

Benyaminyan had his jaw smashed by a bullet but managed to drive away, with passers-by calling an ambulance and the attacker fleeing, Lifenews.ru said.

The officer remained hospitalized in serious condition Thursday, Interfax said.

A case was opened on charges of illegal firearms possession and the attempted murder of a policeman, punishable with up to life in prison.

Benyaminyan sparked ultranationalists' fury last year when he was involved in a communal

dispute between a Moscow music teacher and an Uzbek family of five who shared an apartment, Gzt.ru said.

The Movement Against Illegal Immigration claimed that the Uzbeks tried to force the teacher, Yelena Zhurina, 45, to move out, "terrorizing" her to that effect, Gzt.ru said. She eventually did leave the apartment.

The ultranationalists said Benyaminyan, who was assigned to resolve the dispute, was a friend of the Uzbek family and sided with them, even opening a case against Zhurina.

The allegations were never proved but prompted many nationalist bloggers to accuse the officer of intentionally harassing "a Russian teacher."

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