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4 Held in Slaying of Frenchman

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Two Uzbeks are suspected of killing French winemaker Thierry Spinelli, his Russian wife and their 3-year-old daughter after quarreling about remodeling work in April 2009, a news report said Monday.

Police have detained 26-year-old Khurshid Normuradov, who previously served time for robbery, and Rustam Kharisov, each of whom accuses the other of carrying out the killings, Kommersant reported. Uzbek nationals Vakhob Turayev and Dzhurobai Ashirov have been detained as suspected accomplices.

Investigators have established that, while remodeling the apartment above the Spinellis' at 15/14 3rd Tverskaya-Yamskaya Ulitsa, Normuradov and Kharisov got into a heated argument with Thierry Spinelli over water leaking into his apartment, the report said. As revenge, they planned to steal a Lexus RX 350 belonging to Spinelli's wife, Olga, and drive it back home to Dzhikaza, Uzbekistan.

They purportedly arranged with Turayev and Ashirov to sell the vehicle.

This is what happened next, according to investigators: Normuradov and Kharisov made

a hole in the bathroom floor of the apartment they were working on around midnight on April 20 and sprayed water into the Spinellis' apartment below.

When the angry Frenchman came upstairs to complain, the workers lured him into the bathroom, clobbered him in the head with a pipe and, using a bedsheet, strangled him to death. They rummaged through his pockets to locate his apartment keys, stormed into the family's home, tied up the wife and demanded the Lexus.

Olga responded that the car was in the repair shop, and the robbers proceeded to ransack the apartment. Upon discovering numerous bottles of wine and cognac, they started drinking heavily, raped Olga and strangled her to death. When they heard the young daughter crying in another room, they gagged her, then set fire to the apartment. The daughter died from asphyxiation.

The duo made off with 2.6 million rubles ($92,000) in cash and valuables. In the morning they went with Ashirov, the only one with a passport and Moscow registration, to sell the loot at pawnshops.

The next day at Kazansky Station, they bribed a Moscow-Tashkent train conductor to let them travel without a passport back to Uzbekistan for 12,000 rubles. They were discovered by passport control officials at the Kazakh border.

The case was sent to the Moscow City Court last week. Normuradov and Kharisov are charged with murder, theft and rape and could face up to life in prison if convicted. Ashirov and Turayev face up to 10 years in prison on charges of grand theft and accessory to murder.

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