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4 Detained, One Dead in Bombing Case

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Law enforcement agencies have killed an Islam convert believed responsible for the twin bombings of police buildings in Volgograd last month, and detained four alleged accomplices, the Investigative Committee said Monday.

The Volgograd blasts, which injured no one on April 26, were practice runs for attacks planned for the Victory Day holiday, May 9, in Astrakhan, 380 kilometers away, investigators said.

Few details of the killing and arrests were released.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said the incident occurred on May 7 in Astrakhan, Interfax reported. He said the suspects were members of an Astrakhan-based Islamist militant group and their leader, a 30-year-old Islam convert nicknamed Umar, was shot dead resisting arrest.

He did not identify the slain man or the four detainees, saying only that they were aged 28 to 30 and had criminal records. A Kalashnikov automatic rifle, a hunting gun, grenades

and homemade explosives were found in the suspects' possession, he said.

State television reported on the eve of the Victory Day celebrations that about 15 people had been detained in Astrakhan on May 7 on suspicion of plotting holiday attacks. No mention was made of any deaths.

In Volgograd, the bombers left bags with explosives near a police academy and a traffic police building. Passers-by alerted the police, giving the authorities time to evacuate the neighborhood to prevent casualties.

Volgograd Governor Anatoly Brovko said at the time that terrorism was not suspected because the circumstances of the blasts indicated that the bombers had not planned to actually kill anyone. Police initiated checks into the local leaders of the opposition Other Russia coalition, which in turn pointed the finger at Islamist militants.

Witnesses told investigators that the bombers traveled around in Volgograd in a car with Astrakhan license plates, Markin said Monday. But investigators identified the suspects by checking the circle of acquaintances of another Astrakhan Islamist militant group busted last year, he said.

Three police officers were killed by the group in a series of attacks in Astrakhan between July and October. Police detained four suspects and killed a fifth in October. A sixth suspect, Maksut Zhumagaziyev, is believed to have fled to the North Caucasus to join militants there, and he is on a federal wanted list, Interfax reported.

Markin said the group implicated in the Volgograd bombings had planned a similar series of attacks on police officers aimed at terrifying the population and promoting radical Islam.

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