

Caucasus Natives Blamed in Fatal Fight

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Investigators said a deadly brawl in December that triggered nationalist rioting near the Kremlin days later was instigated by North Caucasus natives, Kommersant reported Monday.

The Investigative Committee made the conclusion as it wrapped an inquiry into the Dec. 6 brawl between ethnic Slav football fans and North Caucasus natives that resulted in the shooting death of football fan Yegor Sviridov, 28, the daily said, citing a committee source.

The North Caucasus natives said earlier that they were defending themselves from drunken fans who shouted nationalist slogans.

Investigators confirmed that the fans were drunk but ruled that the Caucasus natives started "picking" on them because of "a difference in the cultures of behavior."

Five North Caucasus natives have been charged with assault and hooliganism, while a sixth, Aslan Cherkesov, has been accused of firing the gun that killed Sviridov. No trial date has been set.

Police initially released all the Caucasus natives but Cherkesov, which prompted a mixed crowd of 5,500 nationalists and football fans to riot on Manezh Square on Dec. 11.

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