

Anarchists Claim Blast on MKAD

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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An obscure anarchist group linked to anti-government attacks on an \$8 billion highway project in the Moscow region has claimed responsibility for an explosion near a traffic police post on the Moscow Ring Road this week.

Investigators on Wednesday opened a criminal investigation into the explosion a day earlier of a household gas cylinder packed with the equivalent of 150 grams of TNT and planted on the 22nd kilometer mark of the MKAD, Interfax reported.

No one was injured in the attack, which investigators labeled as hooliganism.

A group called Anarchist Guerrilla said the attack was meant to punish traffic police, "who are no better" than other police officers, according to a statement published by Kommersant. To buttress that point, the statement cited several high-profile cases involving traffic police officers.

The statement said the blast was not intended to hurt anyone.

The group earlier claimed responsibility for setting fire to construction vehicles laying a Moscow–St. Petersburg highway through a centuries–old oak forest in Khimki north of Moscow, Kommersant said. The project has been condemned by environmentalists and members of various political groups, including those on the far–right and far–left fringes.

"I am not surprised that in the absence of free elections, some groups from both the right and the left have turned to terrorist tactics because they don't see any other options," said Sergei Udaltsov, leader of leftist Rot Front group.

"If no serious political reforms are carried out, I expect to see an increase in these kinds of actions," he said by telephone.

He added that he personally does not support such tactics.

In August, a group of anti–fascists attacked Khimki City Hall in connection with the highway construction. Two suspects have been charged with hooliganism in connection with the attack. They face up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Members of left–wing groups have often complained that the authorities are more tolerant of those on the far right. In December, Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev blamed "leftist radicals" of provoking rioting on Manezh Square, even though many protesters belonged to the nationalist groups.

"We have a right–wing government that governs in favor of big capital, so it sees the leftist ideas as more dangerous ones," Udaltsov said.

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