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Magadan Television Editor Stabbed to Death at Home

By Natalya Krainova

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The editor-in-chief of a leading television broadcaster in the far eastern Magadan region has been stabbed to death in his apartment in an attack thought to be linked to a domestic dispute, not his work, investigators said in a statement.

A suspect has been established in the death of Anatoly Bitkov, 37, of Kolyma-Plyus television, and the name will be released to the public on Thursday, Bitkov's colleague Anton Shaller told Rossiiskaya Gazeta, citing officers conducting the investigation.

But investigators said they have not ruled out the possibility that the killing was connected with Bitkov's professional activities.

Bitkov authored and hosted news, analytical and informational programs for Kolyma-Plyus, the mouthpiece of Magadan government, RIA-Novosti reported.

A regional lawmaker with United Russia, Oksana Bondar, said she believed that his death was "probably connected to his private life" and "hardly with professional activities," she said by telephone Wednesday.

Bitkov, also a United Russia member, "acted civilly in his programs, and if he voiced criticism, it was well reasoned," Bondar said.

Bitkov's last program on Tuesday was dedicated to drug abuse, including the sale of medicine misused by addicts without receipts in the region, she said. During the program, he interviewed regional government officials.

Magadan Governor Nikolai Dudov has taken the case under his personal control, RIA-Novosti said. Kolyma-Plyus suspended all entertainment and advertisement broadcasts Wednesday.

Bitkov is survived by his mother and a younger brother, who works at the same television channel, Rossiiskaya Gazeta said.

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