

# Turkey Detains Suspects in Chechen Plot

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ANKARA, Turkey — A Turkish court on Wednesday began questioning a man and three alleged accomplices suspected of attempting to kill a former Chechen separatist leader in Istanbul, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported.

Shamsuddin Batukayev, a 55-year-old Muslim scholar and leader of the Chechen separatist movement in the 1990s, said this week that his bodyguards had foiled an attempt to kill him by overpowering an armed man who came to his home in Istanbul posing as a Chechen seeking his help.

Anatolia said police detained the suspect and three other people and seized a gun with a silencer during a search of the suspect's hotel room. On Wednesday, the four were questioned by a court that will decide whether to charge them or set them free.

Anatolia identified the suspect as Barham B. but did not reveal his nationality. There was no information on the other three suspects.

Anatolia said the man told police during initial questioning that he was given the task of killing Batukayev by someone he "did not know" while in Russia and that another Russian

— whose identity he also did not know — gave him the gun in Istanbul.

Kavkaz Center, a web site sympathetic to the North Caucasus insurgency, identified the alleged would-be-killer as Barham Batumayev. It claimed that the other detained suspects included Uvais Akhmadov, an alleged associate of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

The plot came weeks after three Chechens were gunned down near a park in Istanbul on Sept. 16. Chechen groups have blamed Russia's secret service for the killings of the three, who were purportedly involved with Chechen militants. Turkish authorities have refused comment, saying an investigation is ongoing.

Their deaths increased to six the number of Chechens who have been killed in Turkey since 2008.

A ballistic examination of the weapon showed that it had not been used in any previous attacks in Turkey, Anatolia reported. The agency did not cite a source for its report.

Batukayev chaired the Supreme Sharia Court of the separatist Chechen government between 1995 and 1997. In the early 2000s, he was part of the so-called Caucasus Emirate, a group of Islamist fighters seeking to establish an independent Muslim state in the Caucasus region. Experts say the group maintains links to al-Qaida.

Russian intelligence officials have not responded to allegations about their involvement in the September killings. ❏ However, a television journalist and member of the Public Chamber said the man detained in Batukayev's house appeared more like an amateur driven by a vendetta than a professional killer. ❏ "The job of a sharia judge during a civil war was about making tough decisions," Maxim Shevchenko, an expert on the Caucasus region, said in comments published Wednesday in Izvestia. ❏ "Perhaps, one of the war children grew up and ... decided to avenge" his relative's death, Shevchenko said.

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