

Suspicious Cloud Purported Plot to Kill Putin

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February 28, 2012



Chechen native Adam Osmayev confessing to the plot on Channel One.

Doubts about a plot to kill Prime Minister Vladimir Putin lingered Tuesday as the lawyer for one of the suspects said the case was fabricated and human rights activists suggested that the two accused assassins held in Ukraine had been tortured.

Chechen native Adam Osmayev and Kazakh citizen Ilya Pyanzin were paraded on state television late Monday, confessing that they had been instructed and trained to assassinate Putin after next Sunday's presidential election while he traveled in a motorcade in Moscow.

The fact that the report, aired on Channel One and on Rossia-1, broke less than a week before the presidential vote was interpreted by some observers as a stunt to boost Putin's ratings, although he is widely expected to return to the Kremlin for a third time.

Osmayev was shown badly bruised as special forces detained him in a room, and later telling

the story of the plot. Multiple cuts on his face are covered with green disinfectant, and he breathes with difficulty.

Pyanzin speaks haltingly, and his face is red.

The television reports said Osmayev was detained on Feb. 4 in Odessa. A month earlier, on Jan. 4, he and two other suspected plotters were handling explosives in an apartment in the Ukrainian port city when a bomb went off, injuring Osmayev and Pyanzin and killing the third man, identified as Ruslan Madayev, the reports said.

Human rights activists said they had little doubt that the men had been tortured. "I had this impression by merely seeing their photographs," said Stanislav Dmitriyevsky of the Anti-Torture Committee, a pressure group based in Nizhny Novgorod.

Tanya Lokshina, a researcher at Human Rights Watch's Moscow office, said she had also been struck by the footage, but added that her organization could not do anything before receiving medical documentation. "Sadly there is little we can do without that," she said by telephone.

Spokespeople for the Ukrainian Security Service could not immediately be reached for [comment](#) Tuesday.

It also emerged Tuesday that Osmayev had been wanted in Moscow for a 2007 attempt on the life of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

The Chechen native was arrested in May of that year along with three other suspects, but later released on condition that he did not leave the country, Kommersant reported. But instead he left for Britain, leading to his arrest in absentia, the report said.

In 2009, two other Chechens were given eight- and five-year prison sentences for planning to assassinate Kadyrov during the 2007 Victory Day celebrations in Moscow.

Human rights activists have called the 2007 plot a political fabrication.

Murad Musayev, the lawyer who defended the two convicted Chechens, said Osmayev had been implicated in the 2007 plot merely because he had known the other suspects. He said he did not believe the current accusations against Osmayev.

"In my mind, the case is 95 percent fabricated by Russian intelligence agencies," Musayev told Moskovsky Komsomolets in an interview published Tuesday.

He suggested that the reported plot against Putin was driven by politics. "As far as I know, he is a decent young man from a decent family," Musayev said.

The television reports suggested that Osmayev, 31, had been introduced to terrorists while studying at Britain's University of Buckingham. However, a spokeswoman for the university said Tuesday that Osmayev had registered at the school in 1999 and dropped out the same year.

Osmayev enrolled in the international studies department and had no scholarship, meaning that he had to pay his own tuition, said the spokeswoman, who refused to give her name,

citing university rules.

Buckingham is one of Britain's few private universities and currently charges tuition fees of up to \$50,000 for a two-year undergraduate degree.

Osmayev's father, Aslanbek, works in the oil industry and has business interests in Ukraine, according to Kommersant. Having rushed to Odessa after hearing of his son's troubles, he was also arrested on Feb. 4 and charged with illegal firearms trade. He was released three days later because he was found to have no links to the plot, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Moscow has yet to issue an extradition request for the suspects, Interfax said.

Commenting on the plot, Putin told reporters in Astrakhan on Tuesday that he has been aware of attempts on his life since becoming prime minister in 1999 but is not scared, Interfax reported.

"People who are in my position have to live with this," Putin said. "But these things must never affect your work."

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