

Clues Help ID Assassination Lynchpin

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A former bodyguard and European envoy of ex-Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov has been identified as the purported plotter against opposition figures Akhmed Zakayev and Umar Israilov.

Former bodyguard Umar Sugaipov is in all probability the Chechen national denied residency in Britain on the grounds that he was a threat to national security, a leading human rights campaigner said Wednesday.

That announcement confirmed similar information [published](#) Tuesday by Novaya Gazeta.

The Chechen is identified only as "E1" in a May 2011 British appeals court decision.

But Andreas Schj ller, a lawyer and activist for the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights, said the biography of E1 closely matches accounts about Sugaipov in Austrian court papers seen by Schj ller.

He said witnesses in the Israilov murder case have stated that Sugaipov traveled to Vienna in October 2008 to prepare for his compatriot's forced repatriation or murder.

"Sugaipov's name appears in Vienna court documents," said Schjaller, who took part in the trial as a co-lawyer for Israilov's family.

Israilov was killed by gunmen in a brazen shooting in the Austrian capital in January 2009.

A Vienna court later sentenced three Chechens to lengthy prison terms for what it deemed a contract killing to silence a vocal critic of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

The London judgment, [published](#) online, states that E1 was a prominent bodyguard for Maskhadov after he was elected Chechen president in 1997.

The judgment further states E1 was sent to Britain in 1999, where for 2 1/2 years he "acted as Maskhadov's representative in a variety of roles."

Sugaipov appears in Western media reports in 2000 as a Maskhadov spokesman for the Chechen Information Center in London.

The judgment says that E1 moved his family to Britain in 2002, where his wife and four of his six children were granted citizenship in 2009.

But London denied him a passport on grounds that he is a national security threat.

The judgment declares E1 had switched sides and aligned himself with Kadyrov by October 2008, when "on Kadyrov's orders" he met in Vienna with the two main defendants in the Israilov murder, Lecha Bogatyryov and Ramzan Edilov.

Bogatyryov, who is thought to be Israilov's killer, managed to escape to Chechnya. Edilov, who changed his name to Otto Kaltenbrunner, was sentenced to life in prison.

Because of his role in the Israilov case, the British judges quote an assessment by the British Security Service MI5 that he is "a henchman of Kadyrov" and would pose a threat to Zakayev if allowed to return.

Zakayev was a member of Maskhadov's cabinet. He has been living in exile in London since 2002.

Kadyrov mentioned Sugaipov and former Health Minister Umar Khambiyev in a February 2009 [interview](#) with Rossiiskaya Gazeta as examples of Maskhadov loyalists he had persuaded to return.

Khambiyev told The Moscow Times that he had no comment on the allegations against Sugaipov, adding that he had "not seen him since last summer."

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