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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Prominent Businessman Shot Near FSB Headquarters

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Alexander Brechalov **Sergei Porter**

A prominent business leader was shot and wounded by three masked men in the heart of Moscow on Friday — just steps away from FSB headquarters, city police said.

Alexander Brechalov, 39, vice president of Opora, a small and midsized business lobby group, was getting out of a car outside the Nautilus shopping center at the corner of Lubyanskaya Ploshchad at 12:50 p.m., when the men — armed with high-powered air guns — hopped out of a vehicle parked nearby and shot him, the police said in a statement.

They then took his briefcase containing cash worth 100,000 rubles ($3,000) and documents as well as his tablet computer.

"The attackers then fled the scene in an Audi," the statement said.

The vehicle was bottle-green with no license plates, Kommersant reported Saturday.

A citywide dragnet was put in place, but no suspects had been detained by late Sunday.

Brechalov, a founder of the Opora Credit holding and chief of the VBO Consulting firm, was conscious when he was brought to Botkin Hospital with a gunshot wound to the chest and was rushed into immediate surgery, Interfax reported.

He was later said to be in satisfactory condition.

“I'm fine! It was just a robbery! I'll get better,” Brechalov wrote on his Twitter account Friday.

His driver told police that Brechalov had been headed to a meeting at the shopping center on Teatralny Proyezd when the attack occurred, Life News reported.

Investigators said their initial impression was that the motive for the shooting was robbery, Interfax reported.

The shooting is the latest in a spate of gangland-style attacks on business figures.

Furniture magnate Mikhail Kravchenko was fatally shot just outside Moscow on May 20 by unknown gunmen. Police later detained a former business partner, Alexei Pronin, from whom Kravchenko had parted ways over a business dispute.

In March, Russian banker German Gorbuntsov was left in a coma after being shot multiple times in London's Canary Wharf.

On May 21, a former Georgian general who gained notoriety by switching sides during a regional political dispute in 2004 was gunned down by masked gunmen on a motorcycle in Moscow.

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