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Politkovskaya Murder Suspect Shot in Thigh

By The Moscow Times

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A suspect in the murder trial of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya has been shot in the thigh by unknown assailants.

"The bullet passed about a millimeter from his artery. We don't yet have any grounds to state that the incident is connected with the case," his lawyer Murad Musayev told Kommersant.

The police have already questioned the victim, Dzhabrail Makhmudov, and are investigating the shooting based on his testimony. They believe that the incident took place not far from the Ulitsa 1905 Goda metro station on Wednesday evening, RIA-Novosti reported.

Makhmudov stands accused of waiting for Politkovskaya near her Moscow apartment building with his two brothers on Oct. 7, 2006, and then standing by while Rustam Makhmudov shot her to death in the elevator.

Former police officer Sergei Khadzhikurbanov is accused of assisting the brothers, and their uncle, Lom-Ali Gaitukayev, is charged with organizing the killing for a price of $150,000.

All the defendants have pleaded not guilty. Dzhabrail Makhmudov, Ibragim Makhmudov, and Khadzhikurbanov were acquitted in 2009, but later that year the Supreme Court ordered a retrial.

The public prosecutor asked the court on Thursday to separate Dzhabrail Makhmudov's trial from that of the other four defendants, so as to pause his case while the process continues.

Musayev objected, saying that splitting the trial "might affect the objectivity of the process." The judge has decided to defer his decision until the hospital announces an approximate release date, Rapsi reported.

Also on Thursday, Politkovskaya's children announced that they would renew their participation in the trial.

In late July they withdrew from the proceedings, complaining that the court had refused to reschedule a hearing and hadn't consulted them during jury selection.

The court is transporting witnesses to the trial from across Russia. On Aug. 1, the judge ordered four witnesses brought from Chechnya, and on Monday bailiffs were instructed to fetch an additional 12 people.

The prosecution announced on Aug. 6 that the testimonies of four of its witnesses are considered "top secret," meaning that their hearings will be closed to journalists and the public.

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