

Terror Attack on Chemical Arms Facility Thwarted, Investigators Say

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

October 15, 2013

The  Moscow Times

Law enforcement officers have prevented a bomb attack on a chemical weapons facility in the Kirov region, detaining two North Caucasus natives on suspicion of being behind the plot, regional investigators said Tuesday.

The unidentified suspects, aged 19 and 21, had planned to detonate a homemade bomb at the Maradykovsky facility in order to "influence the decision-making process of authorities and international organizations," the regional branch of the Investigative Committee said on its website.

Numerous terrorist attacks have been perpetrated in recent years across Russia targeting civilians and moderate Muslim leaders, but the attacks have rarely been aimed at weapons facilities. Most of the attacks have been carried out by North Caucasus natives with ties to a rebel movement that seeks an independent Muslim state in southern Russia.

In late September, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said it was possible that some of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal may end up being destroyed in Russia, triggering fears among Kirov region residents that the arms would end up at Maradykovsky, regional media reports said. Maradykovsky is one of eight facilities in Russia for the storage and destruction of chemical weapons.

The suspects in the planned bombing attack were not local residents, having only arrived to the region in September from Moscow, top regional investigator Grigory Zhitenyov told a news conference, news website Pervoistochnik reported.

The suspects arrived in the Kirov region town of Kotelnich in September, officially to receive foreign passports, and acquired components for a bomb containing the equivalent of 10 kilograms of TNT, which they stored at an abandoned house, Zhitenyov said.

Pervoistochnik posted photographs and videos depicting explosives and other bomb components, as well as extremist books, supposedly confiscated from the suspects.

The young men have refused to testify, Zhitenyov said.

A criminal case has been opened against the suspects on the charge of plotting a terrorist act, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

One of the suspects additionally faces up to five years in prison for "putting up active resistance" to Federal Security Service officers when they detained him and his alleged accomplice.

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

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