

Volgograd Bomber Planned to Blow Up Shopping Center

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The suicide bomber who blew up a bus in Volgograd, killing six people and injuring 37 others, may have initially planned to detonate the explosives in a shopping center, investigators said Friday.

Bomber Naida Asiyalova, 30, visited the Akvarel entertainment center less than an hour before the attack last Monday, and investigators think that it was her primary target, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said Friday.

She entered the shopping center at 1:16 p.m., but left soon after, boarding the No. 29 bus at 1:31 p.m. and blowing it up 35 minutes later.

The Dagestan native Asiyalova, who was originally heading to Moscow before switching to a local bus in Volgograd, may have reassessed her local target due to the lack of people inside the shopping center, Markin said.

He also said Asiyalova conveyed the explosives from Dagestan to the southern Russian city herself and had no contact with any accomplices on the day of the bombing.

On Sunday, Volgograd region police detained a 23-year-old Dagestan native heading from Moscow to Derbent, Azerbaijan, on suspicion of participating in an illegal militant group, Interfax reported. It is currently unclear whether the detention is connected to last week's attack.

The possibility that militant organizations were involved in planning the bombing is still being explored, though investigators now think that attempts to find complicit terrorist groups in Volgograd would prove fruitless. Instead, the Investigative Committee will focus its attention on Dagestan and Asiyalova's more recent home, Moscow.

Izvestia reported Thursday that the intelligence service was trying to identify people in Moscow who worked with and knew Asiyalova during her seven years in the capital, the implication being that she may have tried to recruit them to take part in terrorist plots.

Asiyalova's 21-year-old husband, Dmitry Sokolov, is thought to be the person most likely to have helped her plan the suicide bombing. Investigators have asked for help in the search operation for Sokolov, who went missing from his parents' Moscow region home last year.

Police have confiscated 800 grams of explosives and a hand grenade from a passenger on a bus en route to Moscow, the Interior Ministry said.

The bus was brought to a halt Thursday afternoon, 458 kilometers into its journey from the Stavropol region. One of the passengers, a 30-year-old man, was found harboring nine blocks of TNT and a hand grenade in his luggage, police told Interfax on Friday.

A criminal case has been opened against the detained man on charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives, which carries a sentence of up to four years in prison.

Russia has been on high alert following a suicide bomber's attack on a city bus in Volgograd on Monday, which claimed the lives of six people.

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