

Former Makhachkala Mayor 'Plotted to Shoot Down Opponent's Plane'

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The Strela-2 is one of several variants of man-portable air-defense systems produced by Russia's KBM.

The former mayor of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, has been charged with illegal arms trafficking and planning to commit a terrorist act, with prosecutors accusing him of plotting to shoot down a political opponent's plane with a rocket launcher, a news report said Monday.

Investigators said that former Mayor, Said Amirov, and his nephew Yusup Dzhaparov planned to kill Sagid Murtazaliyev, a deputy in Dagestan's parliament, to "affect the decision making of the government of the republic of Dagestan," Kommersant reported.

This is the second successive criminal case opened against Amirov, who was indicted in June on charges of organizing the 2011 killing of Arsen Gadzhibekov, the chief investigator of a district of Makhachkala.

Evidence for the latest charges arose during investigations into Gadzhibekov's death, investigators said.

Magomed Abdulgalimov, a former aide to the prosecutor general of Khasavyurt, confessed to purchasing a Strela-2 portable missile launcher in March 2012 and showing it to Dzhaparov in May that year.

Investigators said that the accused planned to use the weapon to shoot down a plane carrying Murtazaliyev and then blame the attack on insurgents.

Abdulgalimov, who has also been charged, reportedly revealed the location of the missile to investigators.

Amirov has denied any relationship with the former official, while Dzhaparov said that he was briefly acquainted with Abdulgalimov through work but later lost contact.

Amirov and Dzhaparov's defense team has protested the indictment on the grounds that the prosecution never presented sufficient evidence for either charge.

"The court supported us, but so far investigators have not presented any materials, only a notice saying that everything is substantiated," Dzhaparov's lawyer said.

Said Amirov was elected mayor of Makhachkala four times in a row — in 1998, 2002, 2006 and 2010 — and was one of the most powerful men in Dagestan until his recent arrest. More than 15 attempts have been made on his life.

Plotting a terrorist attack carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, while illegal arms trafficking is punishable by up to a six-year prison term.

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