The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Nationalist Suspected in High-Profile Killings Extradited

By Natalya Krainova

November 10, 2013




Serbia has extradited a Russian nationalist leader to Moscow on charges of setting up a gang accused of committing at least a dozen high-profile killings, in a move analysts say may signal a turf war in the Kremlin.

Russia's request to extradite Ilya Goryachev — the former leader of the nationalist group Russky Obraz who is implicated in the killings of lawyer Stanislav Markelov in 2009 and judge Eduard Chuvashov in 2010 — may indicate an attack on President Vladimir Putin's aide Vladislav Surkov and his associates, two sources told The Moscow Times.

The extradition also comes amid concerns over heightened nationalist sentiment and intensified debate over immigration policies.

The Kremlin cooperated with Goryachev's Russky Obraz when Surkov, who is reported to have invented the concept of "manageable nationalism," oversaw domestic policy as deputy

Kremlin chief of staff between 2008 and late 2011, according to Vladimir Pribylovsky, an expert on political elites.

Goryachev has been extradited on several charges, including his suspected leading role in creating the Military Organization of Russian Nationalists, known by its abbreviation, BORN. The group carried out a number of murders motivated by ethnic hatred in Moscow between 2008 and 2010, the Investigative Committee said in a statement Friday.

The probe against BORN was led with the support of the Federal Security Service.

Apart from the charges of setting up an extremist group and a criminal gang, Goryachev is charged with involvement in several murders as a member of BORN, including that of lawyer Stanislav Markelov, who was gunned down on a Moscow street in January 2009 together with Novaya Gazeta reporter Anastasiya Baburova.

In addition, Goryachev is charged with illegal arms trafficking. He faces up to life in prison if convicted of all the charges.

Although the probe into the activities of BORN failed to confirm Goryachev's involvement in the killing of Moscow City Court judge Eduard Chuvashov, investigators did manage to determine the involvement of other members of BORN in Chuvashov's murder. Chuvashov had sentenced several nationalists to long prison terms after convicting them of a series of murders motivated by ethnic hatred.

Goryachev's lawyer, Mark Feigin, told Dozhd television on Saturday that evidence against his client was based solely on the testimony of two other nationalists, Yevgenia Khasis and Nikita Tikhonov, who were sentenced to lengthy prison terms in 2011 for the killing of Markelov. Tikhonov may have testified under pressure, he said.

Feigin said he would ask the court for his client's case to be tried by a jury, since "Goryachev has no chances at mercy in a court where a judge will be solving issues singlehandedly."

Pribylovsky, head of the Panorama think tank, said by phone that Goryachev's extradition may have been facilitated by Surkov's enemies in the Kremlin.

"Surkov had no relation to BORN, but he had relations to its legal wing — Russky Obraz," Pribylovsky said.

"It is very possible that Surkov's enemies want to use testimony about his ties to extremist groups against him," Pribylovsky said, adding that "if necessary, Goryachev could testify against Surkov."

As for Surkov's potential rivals, Pribylovsky cited Vyacheslav Volodin, who replaced Surkov as first deputy chief of Kremlin staff in December 2011, and Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin, whose agency opened a criminal case into misspending of Skolkovo funds and implicated Surkov in the case.

Nationalist leader Alexander Belov, former head of the now banned Movement Against Illegal Immigration, or DPNI, said Goryachev had told him that his group Russky Obraz cooperated with the Kremlin in the past.

"Maybe Goryachev didn't meet Surkov personally, but surely Surkov was kept posted [about the activities of Russky Obraz]," Belov said by phone.

Goryachev's prosecution "may be used against Surkov to remove him," Belov said.

Alexander Verkhovsky, head of the Sova Center, which monitors xenophobia and extremism, said he did not believe that Goryachev's extradition was an attack on Surkov, however.

He said by phone that it was "unlikely that Surkov controlled Russky Obraz personally," though "separate activities" of the group "might have been coordinated with the presidential administration."

Verkhovsky also expressed skepticism about Belov's statements, saying that Belov could not be impartial about Goryachev because the two were rivals at the time of Surkov's term as deputy Kremlin chief of staff, with Russky Obraz and the DPNI in direct competition.

Goryachev and another BORN member, Mikhail Volkov, were detained in May in Serbia and Ukraine, respectively, on an international search warrant issued at Russia's request.

Volkov was extradited from Ukraine in September, Kommersant reported at the time.

Goryachev is also charged with involvement in the killings of antifascist leaders Fyodor Filatov in 2008 and Ilya Dzhaparidze in 2009, as well as the 2009 killing of Azeri national Rasul Khalilov, a member of the Cherniye Yastreby, or Black Hawks, a nationalist group made up of North Caucasus natives who attacked ethnic Russians.

Another suspected victim of Goryachev and his group was Tajik national Salakhadin Azizov, who was killed in 2008. Azizov's killers cut off his head and dumped it at an office of district authorities in Moscow with a note demanding that unidentified authorities change their migration policies.

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/11/10/nationalist-suspected-in-high-profile-killings-extradited-a29408