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Relatives of Mafia Boss' Victims Get to Check He's Really Dead

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Sergei Tsapok is the fourth member of the gang to die behind bars.

In a final testament to a ruthless mafia boss's ability to manipulate the law, investigators presented his corpse to relatives of his victims, news agencies reported on Wednesday.

After having been convicted in November of masterminding 19 murders in southern Russia's Krasnodar region, Sergei Tsapok was pronounced dead of heart failure on Monday. He was 38.

But several people who lost relatives to Tsapok's thugs believed the death could have been staged by corrupt officials on his payroll, RIA Novosti said.

Tsapok's gang de-facto ruled the village of Kushchyovskaya for 12 years, having bribed or threatened the authorities into submission. The ringleader could have forced local officials to bust him out of jail under threat of exposure, the report said.

To dispel rumors of the potential use of a body double, a group of skeptics was granted

permission to examine Tsapok's body in the morgue, confirming his identity, Komsomolskaya Pravda reported Wednesday.

"I wanted to dance by his corpse, but the investigator did not let me," one of the viewers told the newspaper.

The body was also fingerprinted, and a DNA study was conducted, the results of which are expected in two weeks.

This may not be the end of the late Tsapok's trouble: The residents of Kushchyovskaya have protested against having him buried at the village cemetery.

He may be laid to rest in a numbered grave on prisoner burial grounds, Komsomolskaya Pravda said.

Tsapok's mother, jailed on property fraud charges, will not be allowed to leave her detention facility to attend her son's funeral, RIA Novosti reported.

Tsapok's reign over Kushchyovskaya, a period replete with murders and the gang rapes of attractive villagers, continued unperturbed until 2010, when the gang killed a defiant farmer along with 11 innocent observers.

Four children were among the others who perished in the mass killing, which was meant to intimidate any other would-be dissenters.

The case hit the national spotlight and resulted in six people jailed, including Tsapok, who got life in prison. He was also stripped of his Ph.D. in sociology.

Tsapok is the fourth member of the gang to die behind bars. Three previous deaths were ruled suicides.

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