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Security Camera Captures Prominent Russian Lawyer's Cold-Blooded Murder

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Tatyana Akimtseva

A lawyer made famous by her roster of Russian celebrity clients was murdered in front of her apartment building in central Moscow over the weekend, and investigators suspect her involvement with an organized crime case may have been the motive.

Tatyana Akimtseva's car stopped in front of her home late Friday night. Footage from a security-camera showed the lawyer's driver step out to gather her belongings, at which point an unidentified man emerged. The man fired a gun at the 44-year old driver, killing him. He then fired at Akimtseva, who had made it to the front door of her building before being brought down.

Akimtseva had been representing Sergei Zhurba, a Moscow region businessman who had testified in court against Dmitry Belkin, who is widely believed to be the leader the Orekhovo gang, which ranked among Moscow's most powerful and violent during the turbulent 1990s.

Revenge ranks as a top priority among the gang's criminal pursuits, Interfax reported, citing investigative sources.

Zhurba had testified to investigators that in the 1990s, he was forced to include Belkin's wife and mother among the stakeholders of his business as a means of paying the group off. In the ensuing decades, the gang has been largely crushed by arrests and police raids. In light of its weakened status, Zhurba removed the two women from his company's list of stakeholders. Shortly afterward, in 2010, he was the target of a murder attempt, which saw his car ravaged by machine gun fire. Zhurba's bodyguard was killed in the incident, while he and his driver sustained injuries.

After surviving the attempt, Zhurba began cooperating with investigators — providing as much information as he could on the group's activities since the 1990s. A second assassination attempt followed suit this past June in the entrance to his office. Zhurba's driver Alexei Zakharov, who was also testifying against Belkin, was murdered this July.

Around that time, Akimtseva told reporters that she feared for her life in light of all that her client had endured.

Security camera footage showing the murders and the as-yet unidentified killer's escape was posted by LifeNews television channel. The gun used to commit the crimes was discovered nearby, news site NewsRu.com reported on Sunday.

Orekhovo dominated Moscow's gang scene in the 1990s. In its prime, the group battled for supremacy with a rival group. Shootouts were commonplace in the city at the time.

During her career, Akimtseva defended many members of Russia's celebrity elite, including singers Filipp Kirkorov and Kristina Orbakaite, and Olympic champion figure skater Evgeniy Plushchenko among others.

Akimtseva's law partner Alexander Karabanov told LifeNews that he will continue to work on the Zhurba case. Both he and Akimtseva had received numerous death threats, he added in comments carried by the news outlet.

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