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Killers of Russian Opposition Leader Nemtsov Were Paid $85,000 – Report

By Peter Spinella

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Zaur Dadayev, charged with involvement in the murder of Russian opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, speaks inside a defendants' cage in Moscow, March 8, 2015.

Russian investigators believe that the team suspected of killing opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was paid 5 million rubles ($85,000) to do the hit, the Rosbalt news agency reported Thursday, citing case materials.

Zaur Dadayev, the alleged gunman from Russia's mainly Muslim republic of Chechnya, was earlier reported to have told investigators he shot Nemtsov because the opposition politician had expressed support for the publication of caricatures of the Muslim prophet Muhammad in French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.

Dadayev, who served in Chechnya's Interior Ministry troops, was purportedly contracted by a group of people outraged at Nemtsov's support for Charlie Hebdo, and used the money to hire other people to help carry out the murder, Rosbalt reported.

The report cited Dadayev as saying while being questioned by authorities that he murdered Nemtsov not for the money but because of his religious views, but that not everyone involved in the killing was prepared to work for free.

Investigators are looking into a widely reported theory that one of the people who allegedly ordered the hit was a fellow Chechen Interior Ministry serviceman named Ruslan Geremeyev, part of an influential Chechen family with a close relative in Russia's upper house of parliament, the report said.

Authorities are currently trying to find Geremeyev, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

President Vladimir Putin said Thursday he believed that "the investigation is on the right track," the RBC news agency reported.

Nemtsov, a former prime minister, was an outspoken leader of the country's political opposition, and his murder in February just steps away from Red Square sent shockwaves through the country.

According to a survey conducted from Friday to Monday by the independent pollster Levada Center, nearly half of all Russians — 42 percent — are following the investigation into Nemtsov's death.

Another 48 percent said they weren't actively following the news, but had heard some things about the case, the pollster said in a statement Wednesday.

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