

Russian Mayor Disappears for Days to Escape Assassination Attempt

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Pavel Plotnikov

The mayor of the capital of Russia's Marii-El republic who went missing over the weekend said Monday his disappearance was part of an operation by authorities to apprehend those who were planning to kill him and his family.

Pavel Plotnikov, mayor of the city of Ioshkar-Ola in central Russia, told reporters that authorities had detained every individual involved in an attempt to kill him on Friday night, including the "hit men, middlemen and those who ordered it," the Interfax news agency reported.

"Someone doesn't like what is being done in this city. Because of my principled positions, there was supposed to be a murder in a forest on Friday night. I thank those police officers who have saved my life," Plotnikov told a news conference.

Plotnikov was earlier reported to have gone missing from Friday night to Sunday morning, when media said he had returned home alive and well.

His disappearance was first reported by his wife, who informed authorities around 1 a.m. Saturday that her husband was missing. They had been supposed to meet outside a gym some eight hours earlier, but Plotnikov didn't show up, Interfax reported.

Speculation swirled in the media while Plotnikov was missing, including that he might have been forced to get out of a Lexus he was driving and into a silver Lada that sped away.

The mayor's office on Monday released a statement saying that Plotnikov was safe and had still been in charge of the city during the days when he was reported as missing.

The statement said that no media outlets were reassured that Plotnikov was fine while he was missing to avoid any leaks during the investigation into the planned murder.

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