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Russian Gangster Jailed for Contract Killings in 1990s 'Aluminum Wars'

By Peter Spinella

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Vilor Struganov

A Russian crime boss whose nervous blinking tic earned him the nickname "Pasha Strobe Light" was sentenced to nine years in prison on Monday for arranging several contract killings in the turbulent 1990s.

Fifty-two-year-old Vilor Struganov, nicknamed "Pasha Tsvetomuzyka," was found guilty of ordering the killings of rivals amid the so-called "aluminum wars," during which purported mobsters fought for control of metals assets, the Interfax news agency reported.

Siberia's Krasnoyarsk Regional Court on Monday said in a statement that it initially gave Struganov a total of 27 years, but reduced the sentence because it had previously jailed him in a similar trial and the statute of limitations for one murder had expired.

The court also found Struganov's accomplices Vladimir Osharov and Igor Yelovsky guilty

of committing two of the murders and respectively sentenced them to eight and 10 years.

The court previously sentenced Struganov to nine years in prison in 2004 for plotting a series of bombings in the Krasnoyarsk region's eponymous capital. He was released in 2011 but arrested again in Moscow in 2014.

In a bizarre twist in Struganov's story, he was reported killed in 2000, and the board chairman of the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant at the time, Anatoly Bykov, was arrested for organizing the hit.

Authorities later said the murder scene in downtown Moscow was staged in order to catch Bykov, who has served as a lawmaker in the Krasnoyarsk regional legislature since 1997.

Amid the murder plot allegations, Bykov was fired from his post at the Krasnoyarsk Aluminum Plant in 2000, but he was still re-elected as a lawmaker a year later.

Bykov was given a suspended sentence in the ensuing trial, thus avoiding prison time, and in 2009 the European Court of Human Rights ordered the Russian government to pay him 26,000 euros (about $30,000) for illegally detaining him.

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