Russian Officials Arrested for Murder, Financing Terrorism

By Ivan Nechepurenko

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Vinogradov himself was detained in a dramatic operation on Monday with the help of special units of the Federal Security Service (FSB).

A Moscow court ordered the head of a region in Russia's restive republic of Dagestan to remain under arrest Wednesday on suspicion of a catalog of crimes including two murders and financing terrorism.

Together with two accomplices, Kizlyar region head Andrei Vinogradov is suspected of being complicit in the murders of a senior manager of the local gas supply service and the deputy head of the Dagestan Interior Ministry's anti-extremism center. In addition, the trio is also suspected of attempting to murder the head of the Kizlyar municipal administration, the Investigative Committee said in a statement Wednesday.

Vinogradov's alleged accomplices, Sagid Murtazaliyev and Omar Asadulayev, have fled Russia and are in hiding, investigators said. The two are currently located in Dubai, the Kommersant

newspaper reported Wednesday.

Murtazaliyev, who preceded Vinogradov as head of the Kizlyar region, is currently head of the Dagestan office of the state pension fund. He is related to Vinogradov, Kavkazsky Uzel (Caucasian Knot) reported, without giving details. He also won a gold medal in freestyle wrestling at the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000.

"Vinogradov, Murtazaliyev and Asadulayev used the services of an organized gang and subsidized it. This led to serious consequences; the gang committed a series of serious crimes," the state prosecutor said at Wednesday's court hearing, Interfax reported.

The investigators did not give details about their financial terrorism claims in their statement.

In a statement to the court, Vinogradov denied his guilt, saying he was "a patriot of his country," Interfax reported.

More than 2,000 people rallied in support of the three suspects in Kizlyar on Wednesday, Kavkazsky Uzel reported from the scene.

Murtazaliyev was one of the key witnesses in the high-profile case of Said Amirov, a former mighty mayor of Dagestan's capital Makhachkala who was dubbed "Bloody Roosevelt" by its residents after one of several assassination attempts left him confined to a wheelchair.

Amirov was sentenced to 10 years in prison last year after the court ruled that he had planned to kill Murtazaliyev by shooting down his airplane with a surface-to-air missile. Murtazaliyev is one of the leading candidates for Amirov's replacement at the upcoming elections in September, Kommersant reported.

Murtazaliyev was also described by Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the neighboring Chechen republic, as a "brother" in an Instagram post last November.

Vinogradov himself was detained in a dramatic operation on Monday with the help of special units of the Federal Security Service (FSB). The homes of the suspects were searched by investigators, who discovered multiple guns and rifles, according to their statement.

Vinogradov's wife Zarema told Kommersant that her husband had all the necessary permits for the weapons.

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