

UPDATE: Turkey Establishes Identity of Nightclub Shooter, Stays Mum on Details

January 03, 2017



Flowers and pictures of the victims are placed near the entrance of Reina nightclub, which was attacked by a gunman, in Istanbul, Turkey. **Yagiz Karahan / Reuters**

Turkey has established the identity of the attacker in the New Year's Eve mass shooting at Istanbul's Reina nightclub, Turkish media have reported, citing a statement by Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

The suspect remains at large, and the authorities are currently not publishing any information about him.

The news comes a day after many media outlets, citing sources within the Turkish authorities, reported that the suspect was citizen of Kyrgyzstan and published a photograph of his passport online.

Shortly thereafter, Kyrgyz national Iakhe Mashrapov confirmed he was the man whose passport was published, but said he was not in Turkey at the time of the terrorist attack, the

Turmush news site [reported](#).

Mashrapov, a 28-year-old trader at the Turatali bazaar outside his hometown of Kara-Suu, Kyrgyzstan, said he regularly travels to Turkey on business.

On Dec. 28, Mashrapov flew to Istanbul, but returned to Kyrgyzstan on Dec. 30. On the day of the Reina attack, he was in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, he said. On Jan. 1, he flew back to Istanbul, but returned to Kyrgyzstan on Jan. 3.

The narrative appears to match stamped pages from Mashrapov's passport, which were published by Turmush.

According to Mashrapov, on Jan. 1, he was removed from his flight back to Bishkek by Turkish law enforcement. The officers questioned him for an hour, saying he resembled the terror suspect. Having established that he was not the man in question, they apologized and escorted him back to his plane, which had been delayed, Mashrapov says.

Upon arriving home in Kara-Suu, Mashrapov was subsequently questioned by the Kyrgyz security services, who also established he was not involved in the terror attack, Turmush reported.

The incorrect information about Mashrapov came amid a flurry of both news reports and speculation about the shooter.

Previously, Turkish police had already said they suspected the attacker was a citizen of Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. A selfie video taken by the suspect and surveillance footage had also fueled speculation the attacker might hail from Central Asia.

On Tuesday morning, the Kyrgyz foreign ministry called the possibility of a Kyrgyz attacker "unlikely." The Ministry has been previously criticized for its sluggish approach to counter-terrorism

Later on, the RIA Novosti news agency reported that two other foreign nationals had been arrested in Istanbul airport in connection with the Reina attack.

The New Year's Eve shooting rampage took the lives of 39 people, 26 of whom were foreign nationals. The Islamic State terrorist organization later claimed responsibility for the attack.

Tensions have grown between locals and the large Russian-speaking diaspora in Istanbul. For the most part, Turkey has been a sympathetic host to Islamic migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Authorities had been especially reluctant to fulfil Russian deportation orders.

That began to change after the June 28 suicide attack on Ataturk airport, and the subsequent detente in relations between Turkey and Russia.

This article was updated to reflect new information.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/01/03/istanbul-terrorist-came-from-post-soviet-kyrgyzstan-says-turkey-a56720>